DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 222 160	HE 015 672

AUTHOR	Johnson, Janet Rogers-Clarke
TITLE	Perceptions of Factors Affecting the Relative Effectiveness of Temporary Blue Ribbon State Commissions.
PUB DATE	Jun 82
NOTE	220p.; Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Denver. For related documents (Blue Ribbon Commission reports reviewed in this dissertation) see ED 011 761, ED 041 468, ED 060 810, ED 090 859, ED 095 785, ED 097 815, ED 125 471, ED 129 161-165, ED 138 163, ED 138 299, ED 148 195, ED 169 823, ED 176 809, HE 015 529-534, HE 015 537, HE 015 540-541, HE 015 543-549, HE 015 551-553, HE 015 811
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC09 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Advisory Committees; Agency Role; Attitudes; Case Studies; *College Planning; Educational Assessment; *Educational Change; Educational History; Government Role; Government School Relationship; Higher Education; *Needs Assessment; *Organizational Effectiveness; Participant Satisfaction; Staff Role; State Government; *Statewide Planning
IDENTIFIERS	*Blue Ribbon Commissions; Maryland; New York

ABSTRACT

Elements in the composition and process of higher education blue ribbon commissions that influence their effectiveness were studied. Blue ribbon commissions, which have been used as one type of statewide planning strategy, are defined here as commissions with (1) a predetermined life span; (2) authority established by the legislature and/or the executive branch of government; (3) members from a variety of backgrounds; (4) staff and funds; and (5) a charge to investigate and/or recommend changes in postsecondary education structures, functions, origins, or processes. It is noted that the Rosenberg Commission in Maryland led to major restructuring of the educational system in the state, while the Wessell Commission's report in New York appears to have been largely unimplemented; these two are analyzed in depth. The study period was 1965-1979, a time during which rapid change occurred in postsecondary education. A secondary study objective was to broaden the base of information on all state blue ribbon commissions instituted since 1965. Final commission reports were gathered from state higher education executive officers across the country. The charges to each commission were compared with the final recommendations of the commission, and the set of final recommendations were compared with subsequent authorizing legislation. Additionally, the perceptions of persons involved with the commission and/or affected by its results were analyzed. Six hypotheses regarding blue ribbon commissions are also evaluated. An overview of statewide planning and coordination and a state-of-the-art review of blue ribbon commissions utilized during 1965-1979 are also presented. A bibliography, questionnaire, responses by commission to open-ended questions, and notes on the study methodology are appended, as is the letter of request to state higher education officers for information on blue ribbon commissions. (SW)

ED222160

PERCEPTIONS OF FACTORS AFFECTING THE RELATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEMPORARY BLUE RIBBON STATE COMMISSIONS

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
University of Denver

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Janet Rogers-Clarke Johnson

June 1982

HE 015 672

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THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

Upon the recommendation of the Director of
the School of Education this dissertation
is hereby accepted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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May 27, 1982
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Higher education, as one aspect of education, is a state responsibility and the states have been wrestling over the past several decades with the issue of how best to deal with the various aspects of statewide planning vis-à-vis higher education. Numerous strategies have been developed for coming up with the best answers. These include: employing consultants from inside the state, employing consultants from outside the state, calling upon legislative task forces, calling upon executive task forces, forming permanent statewide planning boards established either by statute or in some cases by state constitutions and appointing Blue-Ribbon commissions. Blue-Ribbon commissions have been established as a strategy for producing constructive change in areas relating to the overall planning of education as well as to specific issue areas.

Historically, the use of Blue-Ribbon commissions is not an isolated or recent phenomenon. Such commissions were being established in the 1920s to investigate, plan and assess higher education. The commissions at that time tended to be concerned with broad policies. This outlook was modified during the 1940s and 1950s when special commissions were asked to help states focus on specific policy issues. During the 1960s Blue-Ribbon commissions were not held in quite such high regard as they had been previously. Critics suggested that perhaps special commissions would have only limited effectiveness since outside experts, convened for a time to conduct a specific study, inevitably were restricted in perspective, whereas the issues under investigation were often ongoing and were bound to persist beyond the assigned time frame. However, Blue-Ribbon commissions were still used and many statewide boards established during this period were a product of special commissions.[1] The use of these commissions has continued through the decade of the seventies, although the total number of these commissions has been largely unknown and their effectiveness largely undocumented. Apparently some of these commission reports found direct application and produced sweeping change within the state system. Other reports simply found their way to rest upon a dusty shelf in an agency office.

Accepting that the establishment of Blue-Ribbon commissions is one type of planning strategy and that the states continue to place emphasis upon the planning process, it is important to investigate the relatively unstudied planning strategy of involving the use of Blue-Ribbon commissions. A Blue-Ribbon commission is defined in this study as having the following characteristics: (a) has a predetermined life span; (b) is established by the legislature and/or the executive branch of government; (c) includes individuals from a variety of backgrounds; (d) is provided with staff and funds; and (e) is charged to investigate and/or to recommend changes in postsecondary education structures, functions, origins or processes. Such commissions have been charged to study and make recommendations on issues ranging from the very narrow, such as the feasibility of establishing a branch campus, to very broad areas of concern, such as the improvement of the full range of educational opportunities in a state. They have been established also for the purpose of ameliorating an existing crisis situation.

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[1] Between 1960 and 1975, twenty-four new boards were established. See R. M. Millard, "Statewide Coordination and Governance of Postsecondary Education: Quality, Costs and Accountability--the Major Issues of the 1980's." Seminar on Statewide Coordination and Governance of Postsecondary Education: Quality, Costs and Accountability the Major Issues of the 1980's, Spring Hill Center, Wayzata, Minnesota, December 11-13, 1977.

The purpose of this study is to determine what particular elements in the composition and process of a Blue-Ribbon Commission seem to be related to its ultimate level of effectiveness.

Concern over the discovery of the most effective ways by which postsecondary education can be given some kind of meaningful and orderly growth or can provide for orderly retrenchment in the 1980s, has led various interest groups, such as trustees, state agency personnel, governors and legislators to consider a variety of alternatives. It is important to these top level state and educational leaders to know the potential worth and limits of the Blue-Ribbon commission approach to policy development in higher education. These special commissions continue to be used as a vehicle to study the situation in which postsecondary education is existing and to make responsible recommendations for its future development. With the ongoing dynamics of postsecondary education and the continual need for reevaluation and assessment occasioned by changing conditions, there would appear to be a likelihood of seeing more special study groups called into being by both branches of state government.

What are some of the changing conditions that institutions, statewide boards and state governments can anticipate as they enter the 1980s and which will make it even more imperative for states to consider alternate planning strategies including Blue-Ribbon commissions? First and foremost, is the decrease in numbers of potential students due to a drop in the birth rate following the post-war boom. According to the Bureau of the Census, the national drop in the number of eighteen to twenty-four-year-olds will be 4.1 percent by 1985.

In addition, there is a continuing decline in the number of high school graduates who choose to continue on to college.[2] Institutions concerned with survival in the face of projected enrollment decline are growing exceedingly competitive in the area of adult, continuing education and lifelong learning. Some institutions are seeking additional older students through nationwide campaigns while others are establishing off-campus operations virtually outside the walls of other institutions. These long distance operations raise questions of quality control and consumer protection and point to an increasing need for regulation and effective state planning.[3]

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[2] Total enrollment decline of this group fell from 54.8 percent in 1968 to 48.8 percent in 1972. Census Bureau data of 1975 show that 47 percent of high school graduates across the country and 31 percent of eighteen to twenty-one-year-olds select to attend college. Within the group of eighteen to twenty-one-year-olds, the enrollment of Black students increased rather dramatically by 56 percent between 1970 and 1974. See Allan O. Pfnister, Planning for Higher Education: Background and Application (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1976), pp. 16, 70, and Lyman A. Glenny, "State Staff and Issues for Budgeting Higher Education," paper presented at the ECS/IEP Seminar; St. Petersburg, Florida, January 1976, p. 7.

A second condition involves fiscal resources. Earl Cheit's descriptive phrase "new depression in higher education" is no longer a startling national revelation but an operational way of life. Inflation and increased costs have been felt by all segments of society and legislatures and executive offices have responded by increasing the number of specialists on their budget staffs and by more closely reviewing budgets received from institutions and state boards.

Additionally, there is no guarantee for the future that higher education will be restored completely to the highly favored position vis-à-vis appropriations as it held following World War II. One reason for this is the politicization of faculties and students during the era of the 1960s. Concomitantly, other areas of public service such as health, energy and conservation are claiming more public attention and funding.

The third condition is the increased demand for accountability. Calls are being made for greater accountability on the part of institutions and state systems by legislatures and governors offices. Accountability is also no longer confined to fiscal audit but encompasses program and performance audits of outcomes, educational results and effectiveness. More attention is also being given to review of programs. Policy makers are attempting to eliminate duplication of services and programs and to ensure and protect quality and diversity among institutions.

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[3] Twenty-four out-of-state institutions now operate branch campuses throughout Florida; several of the home institutions are as far away as California, and in 1978, forty-seven out-of-state institutions were operating 168 extension operations within the boundaries of the fourteen Southern Regional Education Board states. See: "A Directory of Independent and Public Postsecondary Institutions in Florida," October 1978, unpublished report prepared under the auspices of: Florida Postsecondary Education Commission, and James R. Mingle, "State Regulation of Off-Campus Programs and Out-of-State Institutions," Issues in Higher Education, Southern Regional Education Board, No. 12, in a series, 1978.

The growth of the proprietary sector has added to the problem since these institutions are not under direct control of the education agency in a state and yet their students are eligible to receive state and federal student aid funds.

Collective bargaining presents another set of conditions which has yet fully to unfold. Richard M. Millard raises several questions as to the future role of collective bargaining.

> Will it increase or inhibit institutional flexibility in meeting changed conditions? Will it tend to reinforce greater centralization, not necessarily through coordination and planning, but through centralization of the bargaining process? What impact will it have when retrenchment, program review, consolidation and performance audit come more fully into play?[4]

A sixth condition to be considered is the force of federal legislation. This legislation usually imposes additional regulations and responsibilities on state agencies and institutions. A variety of dictates fall beneath this federal umbrella, such as affirmative action and handicapped legislation. Careful delineation of mission, role and scope along with effective planning on both the part of the institution and the state of the gamut of postsecondary education appear to be necessary as the unsteady state continues into the 1980s.

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[4] Millard, "Statewide Coordination and Governance of Postsecondary Education."

It is with conditions such as those described above that state agencies and state governments wrestle. As the charges assigned to Blue-Ribbon commissions reflect efforts to deal with these conditions, it is possible to see some of the reasons for the establishment of such agencies as elements in the planning strategy. Indeed, the shift in the role of state government regarding education and the changing profile of state legislatures is creating a trend toward greater reliance on specialized committees. New developments in staff and structure of state governments also give added significance to any study of the effectiveness of Blue-Ribbon commissions.

The growing sophistication of data gathering and management techniques, of budgeting procedures, and of the staffs involved in state agencies promotes state governments to conduct their own in-depth analyses, to review statewide systems of education and even to review the appropriation requests and program planning of individual institutions. These activities are motivated by the large financial contribution made by the state to education coupled with a certain lack of faith on the side of state government in the institutional or indeed the statewide board's ability effectively and efficiently to plan for the expenditure of state appropriations.

The character of state legislatures has been changing over the last decade in capacity, internal distribution of power, habits of work and composition.[5] An increase in capacity is due to an increase in the size of legislative staffs. The key word with regard to these staffs is professionalism.[6] The use of staffs of specialists allows for more areas of expertise and more sophisticated analysis which help the legislature deal with a growing and complex number of issues. The internal power structure has evolved from a strong centralized leadership to a more fragmented structure occasioned by heavier reliance on standing committees. In conjunction with their staff, these committees are developing policies and programs for legislative consideration and it is the standing committee on education, for example, that is the focal point for in-depth investigation and deliberation instead of the older style of more general discussion in the full legislature.

Rosenthal describes the modern legislators as being more independent, moralistic, aggressive and issue-oriented. He claims they are:

> creatures of the contemporary climate and therefore more critical of education. . . . They are involved and assertive in policy formulation and increasingly in the exercise of oversight and control.[7]

Another group wielding substantial power within state government is the governor's budget staff. This staff joins the ranks of those state level groups described by Lyman Glenny as the "anonymous leaders of higher education."[8] Given that a Blue-Ribbon commission is a type of specialized planning mechanism that is consistently used along with legislative committees and statewide board planning processes it is important to identify what particular elements in the composition and process of a Blue-Ribbon commission seem to be related to its ultimate level of effectiveness.

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[5] Alan Rosenthal, "The Emerging Legislative Role in Education," Compact XI, no. 1 (Winter 1977), 2.

[6] "Legislative Staffing," report prepared by Oregon Legislative Research, November 1973.

[7] Rosenthal, "The Emerging Legislative Role in Education."

The agencies and individuals who can profit from this information include governors, legislators and state boards (coordinating and governing) and the variety of institutions within a state who are most likely to be affected by the recommendations made by such a special commission, and also students and scholars who seek to improve conditions and the study of higher education.

This study identified characteristics of Blue-Ribbon commissions in two states carefully selected for an in-depth analysis of the conditions that seem to be related to the relative success or lack of success and effectiveness of such commissions. The selection of two states upon which to base the study, Maryland and New York, was made in consultation with Dr. Richard M. Millard, then Director, Postsecondary Education Department and Dr. Louis Rabineau, Director, Inservice Education Program, both with the Education Commission of the States. Advice and direction has been solicited from others, including Robert O. Berdahl, Lyman A. Glenny, Sheldon Knorr and Rexford Moon.

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[8] Lyman A. Glenny, "The Anonymous Leaders of Higher Education," The Journal of Higher Education XLIII, no. 1 (January 1972), 18.

The selection of two particular states for in-depth analysis was made with the object in mind that a study seeking to discover elements of effectiveness should look at states that appear to have experienced different outcomes from their Blue-Ribbon commissions. Maryland and New York have each had a series of special commissions. The Rosenberg Commission in Maryland is viewed by many as having led to major restructuring of the educational system in that state whereas the report of the Wessell Commission in the state of New York appears to have been largely unimplemented.

A secondary objective of this study, has been to broaden the base of information on all Blue-Ribbon commissions which have been instituted in the states since 1965. In the study of the two commissions, data have been gathered and the final reports requested of other commissions from state higher education executive officers across the country. This information has provided the basis for the compilation of a bibliography of commissions that enables the Education Commission of the States to develop a repository of reports for future use.

This study confines itself to the years 1965 through 1979. This is a recent time period during which rapid change occurred in postsecondary education. This span of years presented a variety of challenges to which postsecondary education was forced to respond. During this time period, at least twenty-two states established Blue-Ribbon commissions through legislative or executive office mandate, and at least nine more established such commissions under the auspices of the statewide planning agency.

For the purpose of this study, the terms "successful" and "effective" can be used interchangeably. A Blue-Ribbon commission is defined as effective if it appears to have produced an immediate and recognizable change in the postsecondary structure, functions or processes in a state. To determine whether a commission was effective involved several approaches. One task was to compare the charges to each commission with the final recommendations of the commission. A second task was to compare the set of final recommendations with subsequent authorizing legislation. A third task was to seek perceptions of effectiveness of Blue-Ribbon commissions by questionnaire and interview among a variety of persons who were either involved in and with the commission and/or affected by the results emanating from the commission report. These individuals included state higher education executive officers, legislators, governors' staff, press, select institutional heads and legislative committee members and staff. This group was asked a set of questions concerning the commission. These questions dealt with the substance of the commission and sought individual perceptions of the effectiveness of the commission.

Postsecondary education is defined as any institution, research, public service or other learning opportunity offered to persons who have completed their secondary education or are beyond the compulsory secondary school attendance age (age sixteen) and who are participating in an organized educational program or learning experience administered by other than schools whose primary role is elementary and secondary education.[9]

Six hypotheses were formulated at the onset of the study and these formed the basis for the questionnaire and the subsequent analysis of the data. It was hypothesized that (1) the nature and characteristics of the commission approach to planning and problem solving would have an impact on effectiveness; (2) that the commissioners would have an impact on the effectiveness of a commission by way of their selection, suitability, accessibility, amount of attention to the activities of the commission, their number of meetings and the leadership of their chairman; (3) that the staff would have an impact on the effectiveness of a commission by way of their selection, number, skills, background, experience, accessibility, background research and ongoing research; (4) that external elements including number of public hearings, use of testimony, media coverage and reaction, use of outside experts and involvement of the governor would have an impact on the effectiveness of a commission; (5) that the commission output including such factors as the number of final recommendations of the commission which addressed the assigned objectives, the substantiation in the final report of the recommendations, the consideration given by the commission to the major affected interests (e.g., sectors) in its efforts towards implementation of the recommendations, the amount of activity of the commissioners in the implementation process and whether the final report led to changes in policies and procedures by other than legislators, would have an impact on the effectiveness of a commission; and (6) that there would be a difference in responses between an effective and an ineffective commission on the following points: (a) that subsequent change in postsecondary education was due to the work and recommendations of the commission; (b) that similar changes would have come about without the commission; and (c) that the influence of the commission on post-secondary education was constructive. A series of questions dealing with each hypothesis was developed in order to discover how each set of factors was related to the effectiveness of the commission.

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[9] "Building for the Future of Postsecondary Education in Michigan," an Interim Report of the Governor's Commission on Higher Education, Lansing, Michigan, April 1974, p. 3.

These hypotheses are examined in detail in Chapter 3 which concerns itself with the methodology employed throughout the study. Chapter 2 provides an overview of statewide planning and coordination and reviews the state of the art of Blue-Ribbon commissions utilized across the nation from 1965 to 1979. Chapter 4 presents in-depth background information regarding the states of New York and Maryland and provides context and information for the two commissions under study. Chapter 4 also includes analyses of the data gathered in response to the questionnaire. Chapter 5 reports the findings of the study and indicates avenues of possible future research.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Growing concerns about such conditions as declining enrollments, increased financial stringency, and accountability have induced state agencies and governments to plan, review and evaluate the effectiveness of statewide postsecondary education and its delivery system. Blue-Ribbon commissions are consistently utilized as a specialized planning mechanism along with statewide planning board and governmental processes. Indeed, the charges assigned to Blue-Ribbon commissions reflect efforts to deal with the current conditions and it is possible to see some of the reasons for the establishment of these commissions as elements in the planning strategy of states.

In order to understand the importance and use of Blue-Ribbon commissions in state planning for higher education and how they represent a kind of interface between the task of statewide coordinating/governing bodies and legislatures and/or other bodies, it is desirable to place them in context by means of an overview of state planning methods, the function of coordinating/governing boards, an overview of statewide coordination and the role of state government in the planning, reviewing and evaluating of statewide postsecondary education. In addition, information on Blue-Ribbon commissions which have been instituted in the states will be provided by means of a comprehensive overview of Blue-Ribbon commissions established across the country from 1965 to 1979. This was a time period during which rapid change occurred in postsecondary education and in which a variety of challenges were presented to which postsecondary education was forced to respond. As defined in this study, a Blue-Ribbon commission (a) has a predetermined life span; (b) is established by the legislature and/or executive branch of state government; (c) includes individuals from a variety of backgrounds; (d) is provided with staff and funds; and (e) is charged to investigate and/or recommend changes in postsecondary education, structures, functions, origins or processes.

State Planning Methods

Conventional wisdom suggests that the two basic elements of effective statewide planning in general are participation and communication and that the form of the process should be suited to the particular state's available resources, political conditions, educational structure and concerns.

There are at least four possible compositions available for a planning team. In 1967 a "traditional" planning method was one that utilized the expertise of out-of-state consultants. These consultants were generally affiliated with a commercial firm or with educational institutions.[1] A second organizational form is a permanent council or board, such as a coordinating or governing agency. This board may also be responsible for the implementation of accepted recommendations.

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[1] Lyman A. Glenny, "Long-Range Planning for State Educational Needs," Seven Critical Issues in Education: Alternatives for State Action (Education Commission of the States, 1967), p. 3.

of the state. This tendency could jeopardize the implementation process by those in-state persons responsible for the adaptation and adoption of the recommendations.[3]

There are, likewise, advantages and disadvantages associated with the team of in-state experts and volunteers. These persons are intimately acquainted with the state of educational history and institutions, and the political and power structure. By bringing together a variety of involved in-state persons, dialogue is encouraged between interest groups who may initially not be predisposed to one anothers viewpoint. The investment of educators and citizens provides commitment and thus a foundation for the acceptance of final recommendations. A larger number of persons are involved, which permits more input upon which to make judgments; more than is feasible with a limited number of out-of-state specialists.[4] However, as with out-of-state experts, this type of commission may not necessarily have the authority to implement the recommendations. It is also possible that members may lack knowledge of alternative solutions in other states. Moreover, prejudice on emotional issues is likely. These factors can cloud a rational set of judgments and destroy effectiveness.

Lyman A. Glenny posits that committees ought to include members of the citizenry, especially those citizens who represent special interests and whose groups take a public stance on educational issues.

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[3] Glenny, "Long-Range Planning for State Educational Needs," p. 3.

[4] Ibid.

He cites such organizations as trade unions and taxpayers' associations and claims that their involvement in the decision making process will facilitate communication between the planning agency and the general public. This communication is especially important at the time of legislative adoption of the implementing statutes.[5]

A broad range of participation in formulating plans or recommendations invites the expression and consideration of a variety of opinions and concerns and generally results in a better plan with a greater chance of societal acceptance. During the formulation period it is extremely important to be in close communication with institutions, the public and political leaders. Without open communication channels the chances of final implementation of the plan are greatly reduced.

> It is the planning process, the kinds of people involved, and the leadership throughout the planning period that ultimately determine whether the plan is understood, is politically acceptable, and can be implemented as designed.[6]

Function of Coordinating and Governing Boards

A major function of each state board is to plan for the educational needs of the state. Generally, state boards in the 1970s were concerned with planning for the improvement of access, especially for the disadvantaged or minority student, and with the continued promotion and vitality of a full-range of educational opportunities. According to state higher education coordinating board officials there are ten major issues in planning postsecondary education:

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[5] Glenny et al., Coordinating Higher Education for the '70s, p. 34.

[6] Ibid.

> (1) financing total postsecondary education; (2) setting priorities among the levels or the segments of higher education; (3) responding to social public needs, accessibility and accommodation; (4) accountability; (5) defining postsecondary education for planning purposes; (6) information central for planning; (7) governance and/or coordination; (8) management, that is, efficiency and productivity; (9) enlisting public support for private higher education; and (10) balancing the position between the political power structure and the institutions.

They conclude that the real issue was political balance which

> . . . concerns effectuating planning and proceeding toward planning public postsecondary education activities for the future.[7]

Each state's coordinating board has a chief administrator in chrge, the state higher education executive officer. Interestingly, the state executive officers stated that the real issue was the decision making process itself. The consensus was that decisions should be arrived at jointly among members of the higher education community, the governor's office and the legislature.[8]

John Porter, then State Higher Education Officer for the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, pointed to some of the harsher realities that state level coordinating boards must face as they work with these three groups. He positioned the coordinating board in the center of a triangle with one side representing the institutions, and the other two the legislative and the executive branches of state government. When maintenance of a dead center position within the triangle is temporarily lost, so is effectiveness with the side from which the board has moved. This precarious situation is complicated by the misinterpretation of ideas or policies.

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[7] Lyman A. Glenny and George B. Weathersby, ed., Statewide Planning for Postsecondary Education (Boulder, Colorado: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 1971), p. ix.

[8] Ibid.

> . . . the role of the state agency is perceived differently by the various constituents of the agency to the end that each constituent has a different perception of the purpose and goals of the agency. The varying perceptions are frequently contradictory and often contradictory or conflicting with the intent and structure of the enabling legislation. This perhaps is fundamentally one of the most damaging forces that there is for state agency relationships since the very definition of effectiveness becomes a changing concept depending on the perspective from which it is reviewed.[9]

By using the example of funding it is possible to observe areas of irritation. The state agency is responsible for making a funding recommendation based on the state's long-range plan for postsecondary education as developed by the agency. The institutions have their own individual long-range plans and budget requests for which, naturally, they will fight tenaciously. The legislative and executive branches, however, anticipate that the agency budget will reflect current financial straits and reduce allocations to education. Should the need-based sum recommended by the coordinating board be too high in the view of the legislature it runs the risk of being ignored or falling prey to politically expedient cuts across-the-board, made with little priority ranking of specific programs.[10]

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[9] John Porter, "Forces that Damage Effective Relationships--State Agencies," paper presented at the Education Commission of the States/State Higher Education Officers Association/Inservice Education Program Seminar, St. Petersburg, Florida, January 28, 1976.

Overview of Statewide Coordination

Allan O. Pfnister has provided a definition which illustrates the basic distinction between a governing board and a coordinating board:

> The former is the legal governing and regulating agency for institutions under its control, while in the latter various levels of review and moral and political suasion are employed. Governing boards relate almost exclusively, if not entirely, to the public institutions under their direction. Coordinating boards can and do relate to private institutions under their direction.[11]

The first state board dealing with education was established in 1784. The New York legislature that year created the New York Board of Regents. While this group was authorized to serve as governing board to Columbia University, formerly King's College, it was also expected to serve as trustees for any future institutions that would appear in the state. In 1787 the legislature gave Columbia its own board of trustees but accorded to the regents the power to oversee the schools and colleges in the state in order to achieve some sort of orderly wholeness among them so as best to serve the interests of the citizenry of the entire state.[12] The New York Board of Regents has been the higher education coordinating agency since 1784.

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[10] Porter, "Forces that Damage Effective Relationships."

[11] Allan O. Pfnister, Planning for Higher Education, Background and Application (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1976), p. 105.

[12] Frank Abbott, Government Policy and Higher Education (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1938), p. 14.

By 1900 governing boards were established to supervise the senior public institutions in Idaho, South Dakota, Nevada and New York.[13] Florida had appointed an agency involving the governor and cabinet which had under its purview all of education for the state.

Between 1900 and 1950, twelve new boards were established. These were primarily governing boards and tended to be instituted by smaller states: "generally those with fewer institutions, slower growth rates, and more limited fiscal resources."[14] These states were largely concerned about the rapid expansion of higher education and its impact on state finances. The primary reasoning behind the creation of these boards was the recognition by the state that there was conflict between the trustees' institutional aspirations and the needs of the state. In addition to establishing six more coordinating boards during the decade of the 1950s, another avenue explored was that of voluntary coordination. Voluntary, by Webster's definition, "implies the exercise of one's own free choice or will in an action. . . ." Herein lies the rub since each institution considers its own best interests and continued growth. This implies that a voluntary association can be undone should strong competition arise between the members. Therefore, the voluntary arrangements of the 1950s tended to maintain the status quo which, in turn, promoted the continued ascendancy of the major institutions.[15] In a period of expansion such as the 1960s this system was proven to be untenable due largely to the rivalry of emerging institutions.

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[13] Education Commission of the States, Higher Education in the States, Vol. IV, No. 10 (Denver: Education Commission of the States, 1975).

[14] Robert O. Berdahl, Statewide Coordination of Higher Education (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Higher Education, 1971), p. 21.

Clearly, more regularized coordination was necessary. By the middle 1970s voluntary coordination had vanished before the ongoing urgency for "orderly growth." The imperative concern about orderly growth was occasioned by the rapid expansion of higher education, especially in the public sector, between 1960-1975. During this fifteen-year period, enrollments increased by over 7 million students, the majority of whom enrolled in public institutions. The private sector did grow during this period, but its overall percentage of student enrollments fell from approximately 50 percent in 1950 to about 21 percent in 1976. Expenditures likewise skyrocketed from $5.6 million in 1960 to around $40 billion in 1976.

Historically, the province of education has been a state responsibility and the proliferation of institutions and mounting costs evoked specific responses and mounting concern within state governments. Thus, between 1960 and 1975, twenty-four new boards were formed, all of which were of the coordinating type with the exceptions of Maine and West Virginia.[16] North Carolina, Wisconsin and Utah formed coordinating board states in the 1950s but changed to governing board states later.

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[15] Lyman A. Glenny, "Politics and Current Problems in Coordinating Higher Education," Campus and Capitol, John Minter, ed. (Boulder, Colorado: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 1966), p. 38.

[16] Richard M. Millard, "Statewide Coordination and Governance of Postsecondary Education: Quality, Costs and Accountability--the Major Issues of the 1980's," seminar on Statewide Coordination and

In addition to coordinating and governing boards, there are two other forms state-level boards can assume. Certain states (Florida, Idaho, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota) have single agencies responsible for the gamut of education. They must plan and coordinate the full range of elementary, secondary, vocational and postsecondary education. The amount of authority which the board assumes relative to the postsecondary arena varies among the states. Some are responsible for only broad planning while other agencies are actually statewide governing boards. This type of single board generally has responsibility for the administration of state student assistance programs and federal programs. Delaware, Vermont and Wyoming have no statutory statewide boards but have established, by executive order, state-level councils or commissions for the planning of postsecondary education.

Below is a list of the states by type and agency:[17]

Statewide Coordinating Board States

Alabama
Alaska
Arkansas
Louisiana
Maryland
Massachusetts
*New York
Ohio
**Oklahoma

Governance of Postsecondary Education: Quality Costs and Accountability--the Major Issues of the 1980's at the Spring Hill Center, Wayzata, Minnesota, December 11-13, 1977.

[17] Official ECS membership list of the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) as of August 1, 1978.

California
Colorado
Connecticut
District of Columbia
Illinois
Indiana
Kentucky
*Michigan
Minnesota
Missouri
Nebraska
New Hampshire
New Jersey
New Mexico
Oregon
Puerto Rico
South Carolina
Tennessee
Texas
Virginia
Washington

*Single board for all levels of public education.
**Coordinating board of control.

Statewide Governing Board States

Arizona
*Florida
Georgia
Hawaii
*Idaho
Iowa
Kansas
Maine
Mississippi
Montana
Nevada
North Carolina
North Dakota
*+Pennsylvania
*Rhode Island
*South Dakota
Utah
West Virginia
Wisconsin

States Without Statutory Statewide Coordinating or Governing Boards

Delaware
Vermont
Wyoming

*Single board for all levels of public education.
+Coordinating for all public and private; governing for state-owned.
**Coordinating board of control.

Role of State Government

The executive and legislative branches of state government customarily review statewide postsecondary education primarily for purposes of funding. Recommendations are usually consolidated by higher education boards and agencies prior to their presentation to the state government. The legislature and governor's office can and do request, from time to time, that the state agencies themselves submit to review. The Alabama Commission on Higher Education, for example, is legislatively required to submit to an evaluation during the last year of each gubernatorial term. This evaluation process is conducted by

> a committee of at least three consultants who are not associated with higher education in the state . . . [and who will] evaluate the effectiveness of the work of the commission and . . . recommend changes as needed.[18]

There are a variety of approaches employed to evaluate the effectiveness of state postsecondary education and boards. Several of these other approaches are outlined by Richard M. Millard, then Director, Postsecondary Education Department, Education Commission of the States, in a recently published article. South Carolina utilized a legislative audit commission in 1977 to evaluate their Commission on Higher Education. In 1978 this led to "some restructuring and strengthening of the powers of the commission."[19] The State of Colorado has extended its "sunset" provisions to encompass the Commission on Higher Education which will be required to justify its existence in 1983. New Jersey, Ohio and Florida have renewable contracts for the executive director of their statewide boards which implies a periodic review of the performance of the board as well as the executive director.[20]

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[18] Act No. 14 of the Special Session of the Alabama State Legislature, 1969.

[19] Richard M. Millard, manuscript for a chapter in a publication (for State Legislatures) on Higher Education Planning and Coordination. Prepared for the National Conference of State Legislatures, 1980.

The approach most often used for a review of governance and structure within a state is to set up ad hoc, special study commissions. "Most of the [statewide] boards which were established in the 1950s and 1960s were legislatively enacted as a result of such ad hoc commission findings."[21] This type of commission, many times labeled a Blue-Ribbon commission, may be called for by a governor, legislature, or postsecondary agency or board. Indeed, the shift in the role of state government regarding education and the changing profile of state legislatures is creating a trend to even greater reliance on specialized commissions.

Blue-Ribbon commissions may be established to address very specific issues or concerns. In 1976 the Arizona legislature authorized a special commission "to make a preliminary investigation of all facets involved in the establishment and operation of a branch campus of Arizona State University on the west side of Maricopa County."[22]

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[20] Millard, manuscript for a chapter on Higher Education Planning.

[21] Ibid.

[22] A Report to the Thirty-Third Legislature State of Arizona on the Feasibility of Establishing a Branch of Arizona State University in Western Maricopa County, by Jack W. Whiteman, Chairman (N.D., 1977), p. 1.

A Blue-Ribbon commission may be issued a broad charge. Such was the case in Florida in 1970, for example, when the legislature requested a commission "to prepare and submit . . . its report and recommendations for coordination and furtherance of all types of education beyond high school."[23] The composition of special commissions can vary. Since 1965 Alaska, California, Connecticut, Iowa, Louisiana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Tennessee and Vermont have reported commissions made up exclusively of legislators. Commissions whose membership represents a combination of laymen and legislators include Arizona, Ohio, Massachusetts, Texas and Wisconsin. In Alabama, Arizona, California, Florida, Michigan, Mississippi, Vermont and Washington commissions have elected to have a mix of educators, laymen and/or legislators. The State of Delaware chose to have wholly lay membership on its 1977 Commission on the Future of Education in Delaware. Some states have utilized the services of special consulting firms to conduct a special study. These firms have contracted directly with the state government or agency to prepare all or part of a report in Alaska, Florida, Mississippi, Missouri, North Dakota and West Virginia. The Blue-Ribbon commission itself contracted with them in Maine.

There has been no central repository containing the reports of these and other Blue-Ribbon commissions. Nor has there been any nationwide analysis of information relative to such special commissions. Because there was limited information, the author undertook a survey of the states to ascertain, among other facts, the number, purpose, authorizing bodies, composition and recommendations of Blue-Ribbon commissions set up across the country between 1965 and 1979.

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[23] Florida Post-High School Education: A Comprehensive Plan for the 70's. A Report on Public and Independent Post-High School Education in Florida to the Florida Legislature, by D. Robert Graham, Chairman (Tallahassee, Florida, 1970), p. v.

Overview of Blue-Ribbon Commissions, 1965-1979

Forty-two states and the District of Columbia responded with information concerning Blue-Ribbon commissions which had been established in their states from 1965 to 1979. This does not imply the absence of special study commissions prior to 1965. As was noted earlier, many statewide boards established in the 1950s and 1960s were a product of special study commissions. Texas, for example, concluded a Blue-Ribbon commission study in August 1964. This commission, the Governor's Committee on Education Beyond the High School, included junior and senior college presidents, university presidents and chancellors, and nineteen individuals from various professions and industry. On the basis of their recommendations, the Texas Coordinating Board was created.

Ten states responding to the survey reported that between 1965 and 1979 there had been no "Blue-Ribbon" commissions established. Table 1 lists these states. Twenty-four states reported studies which included some but not all of the aforementioned criteria of a Blue-Ribbon commission used in this study. For example, states in which the legislature exclusively conducted a special study either by its own members or by contract with a professional research organization (Table 2) do not qualify since the composition of the special study committee/commission does not represent a mix of individuals from a variety of backgrounds.

Table 1

States Reporting No Blue-Ribbon Commissions Between 1965 and 1979*

Arkansas
Georgia
Hawaii
Idaho
Kentucky
Minnesota
New Mexico
Oklahoma
Pennsylvania
West Virginia

*Based on correspondence to author from each state.

Table 2

States in Which the Legislature Conducted a Special Study Either by its Own Members or by Contract with a Professional Research Organization*

**Alaska
California
Connecticut
Illinois
**Iowa
Louisiana
Nebraska
North Dakota
Tennessee
Vermont
**West Virginia

*Based on correspondence to author from individual states.
**Denotes those states which contracted with a professional research organization.

Table 3 lists those states which have conducted special studies at the instigation of the statewide planning agency and those states, California and Wisconsin, in which the statewide agency itself was requested to prepare a study by either the legislature or the governor.

Table 3

States in Which the Statewide Planning Agency was Responsible for a Special Study*

California	Oregon
Illinois	Rhode Island
New Jersey	Texas
North Dakota	Wisconsin
Ohio	

*Based on correspondence to author from individual states.

A variety of additional configurations have been employed in states to study or explore postsecondary issues. New Jersey witnessed a small group of concerned citizens from the New Jersey Citizen's Committee for Higher Education. "The committee aimed to arouse the public to the urgent problem of the state's inadequacy in the whole range of higher educational services and to support measures which would insure a sound long-term solution."[24] Ohio has a Governor's Council for Cost Control which is a nonprofit corporation organized and financed by the state's private sector. This council has undertaken several studies concerned with higher education.

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[24] Letter from Adolph I. Katz, Director, Office of Planning and Research, State of New Jersey, Department of Higher Education, April 1979.

Based upon responses, it appears that there have been twenty-two states which, according to the criteria used in this study, have set up Blue-Ribbon commissions between 1965 and 1979. Table 4 provides a listing of these states, the year(s) of their commissions and the authorizing body. Where members were appointed by other than the authorizing body is noted at the side.

As can be noted from Table 4, eleven states, or 50 percent of those reporting Blue-Ribbon commissions established and appointed by either the governor or legislature between 1965 and 1979, have had more than one Blue-Ribbon commission. Table 5 groups these commissions chronologically by years.

Table 5 shows that there were a similar number of commissions established and/or issuing reports across the nation between 1965-69, 1970-74 and 1975-79. It would not appear that the states have in any real sense opted to discontinue the use of Blue-Ribbon commissions as a vehicle for studying postsecondary education issues during the past fifteen years.

Table 6 illustrates which states conducted Blue-Ribbon commission studies within these five-year periods and the number of commissions in each state within each time period.

The majority of states reporting Blue-Ribbon commissions appear to have had one commission within any five-year period. Exceptions are Indiana, Florida and Delaware. With reference to Table 4

Table 4

States Conducting Blue-Ribbon Commission Studies Between 1965 and 1979*

State	Year	Authorized By
Alabama	1968	Legislature
	1977	Lieutenant Governor
Arizona	1976	Legislature
California	1978	Governor
Connecticut	1971	Governor
	1976	Governor
Delaware	1976	Governor
	1977	Governor
Florida	1970	Legislature (appointed by governor)
	1973	Governor
Illinois	1976	Governor
Indiana	1965	Governor
	1967	General Assembly
	1969	Governor
	1971	Governor
Iowa	1969	Governor
	1979	Governor
Maine	1966	Legislature (appointed by governor)
	1973	Legislature (2 members to be appointed by the legislature; 11 members to be appointed by governor)
Maryland	1975	Governor
Michigan	1974	Governor

Table 4 (continued)

State	Year	Authorized by
Mississippi	1974	Governor
Missouri	1970	Governor
	1978	Governor (6 members appointed by legislature)
Montana	1974	Governor
New York	1968	Governor
	1973	Governor
	1976	Governor
North Carolina	1971	Governor
Tennessee	1971	Governor
Texas	1977	Legislature (9 members appointed by governor)
Vermont	1969	Governor
	1973	Governor
Washington	1969	Legislature (some members appointed by governor)
Wisconsin	1968	Governor
	1970	Governor
	1976	Governor

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*Copies of all final reports made available are on file and may be borrowed from the Education Commission of the States, 1860 Lincoln Street, Suite 300, Denver, Colorado 80295.

Table 5

Number of Commissions Established 1965-79

Number of Commissions in Year	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79
0								X							
1	X	X	X								X				X
2														X	
3				X		X				X			X		
4					X		X		X						
5												X			

Table 6

States and Respective Number of Commissions Within Five-Year Periods From 1965-1979

Year	State	Number of Commissions
1965-1969	Alabama	1
	Indiana	3
	Iowa	1
	Maine	1
	New York	1
	Vermont	1
	Washington	1
	Wisconsin	1
1970-1974	Connecticut	1
	Florida	2
	Indiana	1
	Maine	1
	Michigan	1
	Mississippi	1
	Missouri	
	Montana	1
	New York	1
	North Carolina	1
	Tennessee	1
	Vermont	1
	Wisconsin	1
1975-1979	Alabama	1
	Arizona	1
	California	1
	Connecticut	1
	Delaware	2
	Illinois	1
	Iowa	1
	Maryland	1
	Missouri	1
	Texas	1
	Wisconsin	1

it is possible to discern that with the additional exceptions of New York, Wisconsin and Vermont no respondent state has had more than one Blue-Ribbon commission within any grouping of five-year periods. Of the twenty-two states reporting one or more Blue-Ribbon commissions, eighteen states issued a broad charge to one or more of their respective commissions to explore issues such as access, enrollments, financing, student transfer policy, adult education, governance, program duplication and long-range planning. In short, the commissions were specifically charged to review the state postsecondary education system and to recommend changes.

Table 7 lists the states which issued broad charges to their commissions and the year of the commission and/or final report. With the exception of Alabama, Indiana and Maine, each commission conducted their work after 1970.

Eleven of these eighteen states had one or more Blue-Ribbon commissions which recommended the establishment of a statewide coordinating/governing board or planning agency or the strengthening of the existing board. Table 8 lists these states and the year(s) of the commission's recommendations.

Current searches of the computer data bases of ERIC, Magazine Index and National Newspaper Index reveal that three reports of Blue-Ribbon commissions dealing with postsecondary education have been entered into ERIC. These are: A Report by the Governor's Task Force on Vocational and Technical Education, Columbus, Ohio, 1969; Alabama's Challenge: Higher Education in the 1980s. Report of the Second

Table 7

States With Commissions Assigned a Broad Charge and the Year of the Commission and/or Final Report

State	Year
Alabama (2)	1968, 1977
California	1978
Connecticut (2)	1971, 1976
Delaware (2)	1976, 1977
Florida	1970
Indiana (2)	1967, 1971
Iowa (2)	1971, 1979
Maine	1966
Michigan	1974
Mississippi	1974
Montana	1974
North Carolina	1971
Ohio	1974
Tennessee	1971
Texas	1977
Vermont	1973
Washington	1969
Wisconsin	1970

Table 8

States in Which Blue-Ribbon Commissions Recommend a Statewide Agency or the Strengthening of an Existing Agency and the Year of the Recommendation

State	Year
Alabama	1968
Connecticut	1977
Delaware	1976, 1977
Florida	1970
Indiana	1971
Michigan	1974
Mississippi	1974
Missouri	1970
Montana	1974
Vermont	1973
Washington	1969

Special Committee to Evaluate the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, Montgomery, Alabama, 1979; and Financing in an Era of Uncertainty, Final Report, Trenton, New Jersey, 1977. Only one inclusion in ERIC attempts an analysis of a Blue-Ribbon commission. Edward R. Hines prepared a policy paper for the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education in Chicago, Illinois in 1978 titled Anatomy of a Blue-Ribbon Commission: The Case of New York State which analyzes the work of the Temporary Commission on the Future of Postsecondary Education in New York State. This paper plus correspondence and calls between Dr. Hines and the author have proved very valuable for this study which has sought to analyze in detail two Blue-Ribbon commissions to determine what particular elements in the composition and process of a Blue-Ribbon commission seem to be related to its ultimate effectiveness. There appear to be no other works on the subject of state level Blue-Ribbon commissions relative to their effectiveness.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Blue-Ribbon commissions have been used as far back as the 1920s to investigate, plan and assess postsecondary education. Accepting that these special commissions continue to be used as a vehicle to study the situation in which postsecondary education is existing and to make responsible recommendations for its future development, the main objective of this study is to determine what particular elements in the composition and process of a Blue-Ribbon commission seem to be related to its ultimate level of effectiveness. A secondary ojective has been to broaden the bases of information on all Blue-Ribbon commissions which have been instituted in the states between 1965 and 1979. The agencies and individuals who can profit from this information would include governors, legislators and state boards (coordinating and governing) and the variety of institutions within a state who are possibly affected by the recommendations made by such a special commission as well as students and scholars who seek to improve conditions and the study of higher education.

This chapter is concerned with describing and explaining the methodology used in the study. First, a systematic review of Blue-Ribbon commissions across the country was undertaken. Second, an in-depth analysis was made of two Blue-Ribbon commissions.

The initial phase of the study, the systematic review, was conducted in order to develop a composite picture of the state of the art concerning Blue-Ribbon commissions. This involved the gathering of data on Blue-Ribbon commissions which have been instituted in the states between 1965 and 1979. This was a time period during which rapid change occurred in postsecondary education and in which a variety of challenges were presented to which postsecondary education was forced to respond.

Each state has its own statewide agency whose major function is to plan for the educational needs of the state. Each state's agency has a chief administrator in charge, the state higher education executive officer. This person usually has the benefit of access to statewide data, other policy decision-makers at both the institutional and governmental levels and a wealth of background knowledge of postsecondary education in his/her particular state. Each state higher education executive officer across the country received a request for information concerning Blue-Ribbon commissions. Forty-two out of fifty states and the District of Columbia responded to this letter of request (see Appendix A for sample of the letter). The following information was then culled from the volume of materials received: the name of the state; year of the issuance of the final report of the commission(s); purpose for setting up the commission(s); the authorizing or establishing body, whether governor or legislature; the appointing body if different from that establishing the commission(s); composition of the commission; name of the commission,[1] and recommendations of the commission. In addition to providing a composite picture of the state of the art of Blue-Ribbon commissions, this information has enabled the Education Commission of the States (ECS) to have a bibliography of these commissions and to amass in one central location copies of the reports, especially the final report of the commissions. It is believed that a library containing these reports will not only be useful to the states but also to students of higher education and others concerned with the topic.

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[1] The official name of a Blue-Ribbon commission can differ from the title of its final report. Also, very often a commission of this type is, in common parlance, known by the name of its chairman.

Two copies of this information were then sent back to the state agency for purposes of verification and/or additional information. One copy was to be returned and the other to be retained in the state's files. Ten states were omitted since their initial response had indicated that no Blue-Ribbon commissions had been set up in these states since 1965. Twenty-two states responded to this second mailing for verification of data.

In twenty-two states there have been one or more Blue-Ribbon commissions established. Twenty-four respondents also mentioned other types of special study groups, e.g., legislative interim committees, task forces and state board authorized commission studies. Although related in purpose, these studies are not central to the immediate objective of the current study. Information concerning these other studies has been analyzed and is available from the author for use by students of the topic.

The selection of two particular states and their respective Blue-Ribbon commissions for in-depth analysis was made with the object in mind that a study seeking to discover elements of effectiveness should look at states that appear to have experienced different outcomes from their Blue-Ribbon commissions. The two states selected for this purpose were New York and Maryland. The two Blue-Ribbon commissions were the Wessell Commission (New York) and the Rosenberg commission (Maryland). The official title of the former is the Temporary State Commission on the Future of Postsecondary Education in New York State, and the latter, the Commission on the Structure and Governance of Education. The two states and commissions were selected in consultation with Dr. Richard M. Millard, then-Director, Postsecondary Education Department, Education Commission of the States (ECS), and Dr. Louis Rabineau, Director, Advanced Leadership Program (ECS).

The decision to select two states for in-depth analysis was made on the assumption that it would be possible to go into greater depth than should one attempt to include and evaluate a larger number. There are certain limitations in this approach, insofar as the number of cases is small. The choice of a narrow sample of two commissions, encompassing a greater number of individuals and allowing for examination at greater depth seemed preferable to a random sampling of twenty-two states over a fifteen-year period. The considerations leading to these decisions are discussed in more detail in Appendix E.

A major factor in choosing the two commissions was the apparent contrast in the effectiveness of these two commissions. For the purpose of this study, a Blue-Ribbon commission is defined as effective if it appears to have produced an immediate and recognizable change in the postsecondary structure, functions, or processes in a state. Long-range results emergent from a Blue-Ribbon commission study may not make themselves evident for a long time afterwards. For example, in Alabama recommendations of the Education Study Commission of 1958 dealing with the creation of a statewide coordinating agency were not implemented. However, in 1968 much the same study was made once again by a group called the Alabama Education Study Commission. The composition of the commission was similar to its predecessor. The findings and recommendations were likewise very much the same but the recommendations of this commission were acted upon by the legislature and put into effect in 1969.

> The difference was that over that ten-year period enrollments in higher education and the number of institutions in the state had essentially doubled so the need for coordination in higher education was much more evident.[2]

The 1958 commission appears to have been ahead of its time and certainly, by definition, was not effective. One could postulate, however, that the commission had a long term impact.

A similar situation arose in North Carolina in 1970. Then-Governor Robert Scott appointed the Governor's Study Committee on Structure and Organization of Higher Education. This commission was unable to agree on recommendations, but a majority of the members urged substantial restructuring of higher education. John P. Kennedy,

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[2] Stated in a letter sent to the author by the Associate Director for Financial Affairs of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (a coordinating commission).

Jr., Secretary of the University of North Carolina which is a governing board comprised of the sixteen public institutions in the state, explains:

> While the recommendations of the majority were not eventually followed, the mere fact that the majority recommended substantial changes kept the idea of restructuring alive, and before the end of the year 1971 the state had drastically reorganized its entire system for the governance of higher education.[3]

In this particular case the commission could be seen as keeping an idea alive and in the public mind and, thereby, leading ultimately to change. Therefore, in terms of the commission itself producing effective change the answer is "no" but, in terms of the commission having some influence and a longer term impact the answer is "yes."

The Rosenberg Commission in Maryland is viewed by many as having led to major restructuring of the educational system in that state, whereas the report of the Wessell Commission in the state of New York appears to have been largely unimplemented.

In order to determine what particular elements in the composition and process of these two Blue-Ribbon commissions seemed to be related to their ultimate effectiveness, or lack therof, it was necessary to undertake the following tasks. One task was to compare the charges, or purpose of each commission. A second task was to compare the set of final recommendations with subsequent authorizing legislation. A third task was to seek perceptions of interested parties about elements possibly relating to the relative effectiveness of the two commissions and thus isolate particular elements in the composition and process of Blue-Ribbon commissions which would be more broadly applicable to any state seeking to have an effective commission.

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[3] Stated in a letter sent to the author by the Secretary of the University of North Carolina.

Both commissions were given a broad charge. The letter of transmittal of the final report of the Wessell Commission to the governor states that "it was created out of the belief . . . that the governance and financing of higher education in New York State required serious re-examination and reordering." The legislation, Chapter 346 of the Laws of 1976, which established the commission reiterated this mood by stating "it should be the duty of the commission to conduct a comprehensive study of postsecondary education in New York State. . . . [and] shall recommend a detailed plan of action embodying the findings of its studies."

The letter of transmittal of the final report of the Rosenberg Commission to the governor states that the commission was appointed "to study the structure and governance of education in Maryland from early childhood through the graduate school" and among other things to come up with "a proposed structural reform." The governor's charge to the commission also echoed concern over the increased fiscal commitments of state and local governments in educational expenditures. Both Wessell and Rosenberg were aiming to study the structure, governance and finance of the statewide educational system.

Although the charges to the two commissions were similar and each commission presented a final set of recommendations, the reception of those recommendations was different in each state. The recommendations put forth by the Wessell Commission fell on hard and stony ground and did not germinate into legislation for action or change. The recommendations of the Rosenberg Commission, however, were duly considered by a subsequent task force and were largely implemented through legislation. Given that a Blue-Ribbon commission is defined, in this study, as effective if it appears to have produced an immediate and recognizable change in the postsecondary structure, functions, or processes in a state, one can assume for the purpose of this study that the Wessell Commission was ineffective while the Rosenberg Commission was effective.

In order to discover what particular elements in the composition and process of a Blue-Ribbon commission seem to be related to its ultimate effectiveness a questionnaire was constructed and sent to a variety of persons in both New York and Maryland. Those to whom it was sent had knowledge of or involvement with either of the commissions and included commission members and staff, legislators, gubernatorial and legislative staff, state higher education executive officers and staff, state board members, consultants to the commission, media persons, scholars, public and private college presidents, university system administrators and foundation executives. Details are found in Appendix E.

The questionnaire was developed after discussion with professionals at ECS. Counsel was also sought from persons involved with the commissions under study. Included in the latter were a commissioner who served on the Wessell commission, one who served on the Rosenberg commission, the author of the Wessell Commission final report, a top legislative staff person in New York State, the state higher education executive officer in Maryland and the author of a policy paper which analyzes the Wessell Commission (see Appendix E).

The questions related to input, content, process and output of a Blue-Ribbon commission and sought individual perceptions. The questions were grouped under six hypotheses, focusing on perceptions of respondents about the following: commissions; commissioners; staff; external elements; commission output; and subsequent effect. It was hypothesized that (1) the nature and characteristics of the commission approach to planning and problem solving would have an impact on effectiveness; (2) that the commissioners would have an impact on the effectiveness of a commission by way of their selection, suitability, accessibility, amount of attention to the activities of the commission, their number of meetings and the leadership of their chairman; (3) that the staff would have an impact on the effectiveness of a commission by way of their selection, number, skills, background, experience, accessibility, background research and ongoing research; (4) that external elements including number of public hearings, use of testimony, media coverage and reaction, use of outside experts and involvement of the governor would have an impact on the effectiveness of a commission; (5) that the commission output including such factors as the number of final recommendations of the commission which addressed the assigned objectives, the substantiation in the final report of the recommendations, the consideration given by the commission to the major affected interests (e.g., sectors) in its efforts towards implementation of the recommendations, the amount of activity of the commissioners in the implementation process and whether the final report led to changes in policies and procedures by other than legislators, would have an impact on the effectiveness of a commission; and (6) that there would be a difference in responses between an effective and an ineffective commission on the following points: (a) that subsequent change in postsecondary education was due to the work and recommendations of the commission; (b) that similar changes would have come about without the commission; and (c) that the influence of the commission on postsecondary education was constructive. A series of questions dealing with each hypothesis was developed in order to discover how each set of factors was related to the effectiveness of the commission. It was anticipated that there would be a difference in responses between an effective and an ineffective commission.

With regard to hypothesis number one, the questions addressed the following:

- the appropriateness of utilizing a Blue-Ribbon commission rather than another type of agency or structure (such as a task force or subcommittee study);
- the clarity, precision and seeming attainability of the objectives of the commission;
- the adequacy of the length of time allotted for the commission to complete its report;

- the amount of delay experienced by the commission in getting organized, staffed and beginning operations; and
- the sufficiency of funds to successfully accomplish its objectives.

With regard to hypothesis number two, the questions addressed the following:

- whether the selection of commissioners took into account the major affected interests (e.g., sectors, university systems);
- the suitability of the commissioners to handle the issues;
- the amount of attention to the commission's activities given by the commissioners;
- the number of times the commissioners met;
- the accessibility of the commissioners to persons wishing to comment; and
- the leadership provided to the commission by its chairman.

With regard to hypothesis number three, the questions addressed the following:

- the sufficiency of the number of staff assigned to the commission to complete the assignment in the time allotted;
- the basis upon which the staff was chosen (e.g., merit, political relationship);
- the skills, background and experience of the staff;
- the accessibility of the staff to persons wishing to comment;
- the depth and breadth of the background research conducted by the staff; and

- the degree to which relevant research (surveys, data gathering, etc.) was conducted by the staff for the duration of the study.

With regard to hypothesis number four, the questions addressed the following:

- the frequency of public hearings held during the life of the commission;
- the amount of consideration given to testimony from public hearings;
- the extent to which the commission sought media coverage;
- the reaction in the media to the commission;
- the repeated use of experts other than commission members and staff; and
- the degree of involvement of the governor in the work of the commission.

With regard to hypothesis number five, the questions addressed the following:

- the number of final recommendations which addressed the objectives outlined by the governor;
- whether the final report of the commission amply substantiated the recommendations;
- the extent to which the political potency of the major affected interests (e.g., sectors) was considered by the commission in its efforts towards implementation;
- the amount of activity of the majority of the commissioners in seeking implementation of the final recommendations; and

- whether the commission report led to changes in policies and procedures by other than legislators.

With regard to hypothesis number six, the questions addressed the following:

- that subsequent change in postsecondary education was due to the work and recommendations of the commission;
- whether similar changes would have come about even if the commission had not been called into being; and
- whether the influence of the commission on postsecondary education was constructive.

A blank page for further comments was attached. All questions, with the exception of two, could be answered by checking an appropriate choice from a series of alternatives provided below each question. Space for further elaboration was provided beneath each question. Two questions required written answers with no provision for alternate choice answers. All questions were to be answered based upon the respondents' opinions and perceptions.[4]

Attached to the series of questions was a cover page to be returned with the questionnaire requesting information concerning the respondent's position at the time of the commission, his/her relationship, if any, to the commission (for example, member, staff, legislator), and his/her current position. Instructions and an assurance of anonymity are also present on this cover sheet. Accompanying the above was a return reply envelope and a personalized cover letter.

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[4] The complete questionnaire is found in Appendix B.

The cover letter (Appendix C) was sent out over the double signatures of the then-director, Postsecondary Education Department and the director, Advanced Leadership Program, both at the Education Commission of the States.

Names of persons to whom to send the questionnaires were sought from several sources including Delegate Lucille Maurer, Maryland, and Rosenberg commissioner; Mr. Fred Spigler, Director, Special Programs Community Service, Maryland Board of Higher Education and Rosenberg commissioner; Dr. Edward Hines, Professor, SUNY, Albany and Wessell staff; Ms. Amy Plumer, Deputy Director for Policy Analysis, State of New York Special Task Force on Equity and Excellence in Education and author of the Wessell Commission Final Report; Mr. James Ruhl, Special Assistant to the Senate Majority Leader, New York; Dr. Richard M. Millard, then-Director, Department of Postsecondary Education, ECS; and Dr. Louis Rabineau, Director, Advanced Leadership Program, ECS.

Fifty-two questionnaires were mailed to possible respondents connected with the Wessell Commission. Sixty-seven questionnaires were mailed to possible respondents connected with the Rosenberg Commission. The discrepancy between the number of questionnaires sent to Wessell potential respondents and Rosenberg potential respondents had largely to do with the difference in the number of respective commissioners. The Wessell Commission had five commissioners while the Rosenberg Commission had twenty-seven commissioners. A second request for response was sent to those persons who did not initially respond. In total, twenty-eight responses were received concerning the Wessell

Commission and twenty-three responses were received concerning the Rosenberg Commission.

Responses received were tabulated separately by commission. The object of these tabulations was to infer which questions appeared to elicit different opinions between the two commissions. Because the responses were a sample of the potential respondents, statistical techniques were employed to distinguish differences which were due to sampling variations from those due to differences in the opinions of the groups. Appropriate procedures to accomplish this end are the so-called Chi-square analyses and Fisher's exact test.

Chapter 4 presents background information regarding the states of New York and Maryland and provides context and information for the two Blue-Ribbon commissions under study. It also contains the details of the various analyses of the responses. The summary and conclusions of the findings resulting from the study of the Wessell and Rosenberg commissions are found in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS

Introduction

Two states, New York and Maryland, have been selected for an in-depth analysis to determine what particular elements in the composition and process of a Blue-Ribbon commission seem to be related to its ultimate effectiveness.

The analysis is based upon the perceptions of select individuals knowledgeable about the Wessell Commission in New York and the Rosenberg Commission in Maryland. Prior to presenting the analysis of the perceptions of persons relative to the Wessell and Rosenberg Commissions, background information is provided concerning the two states and their respective Blue-Ribbon commissions.

Both New York and Maryland have had several Blue-Ribbon commissions established during the course of their histories to address a variety of educational concerns. Some of these commissions in both states may be considered to have been effective, according to the definition of effectiveness of this investigation, in that they appear to have produced an immediate and recognizable change in the post-secondary structure, functions or processes in a state.

Table 9 and 10 suggest that the Maryland Blue-Ribbon commissions have met with mixed success while the New York commissions have met with overwhelming success. It should be noted, however, that the

Table 9

Summary of Major Blue-Ribbon Commissions in Education in Maryland Prior to the Rosenberg Commission

Year	Commission	Recommendations	Effect	Purpose
1924	Janney	(1) Maintain the University of Maryland as an agricultural and mechanical arts institution. (2) Establish a "college commission" to coordinate institutions and maintain quality standards. (3) Phase out state financial support to independent institutions. (4) Revamp the current system of scholarship aid by providing direct aid to students.	(1) in part (2) none (3) none (4) none	The University of Maryland was proposing to expand its offerings and to attempt to transform itself from basically an agricultural and mechanical general university curriculum such as was being offered at some of the more renowed state universities in the mid-west.
1931	Shriver	(1) Further the development of the University of Maryland in light of increases in enrollments. (2) Institute a special student transfer policy if state aid to private institutions was to be continued. (3) Convene a study group to look at state-aided institutions with the view to possible redefinition of their role and scope in relation to the overall state needs and to develop a financial program leading to their self-support.	(1) yes (2) none (3) in part	Increasing numbers of students seeking entrance from high school into higher education institutions.
1937	Soper	(1) State takeover and development of Morgan College. (2) Improve Bowie Normal School and Coppin Normal School (Black elementary teacher training institutions). (3) Princess Anne Academy (the eastern branch of the University of Maryland) should be a high school and offer primarily vocational training.	(1) yes (2) in part (3) none	To investigate the comparative offerings of Black institutions with white instructions.
1947	Marbury	(1) Establish a statewide system of locally controlled, racially integrated, comprehensive two-year colleges. (2) Expand University of Maryland to 10,000 enrollment. (3) Increase appropriations to Morgan and the development of a graduate school curriculum. (4) Establish a permanent state board of higher education. (5) Revise student scholarship policy.	(1) none (2) none (3) none (4) none (5) none	To study the issue of access for all who could benefit from higher education and the need to increase in number and quality the programs offered for Black students. Emphasis was on the strengthening of the public sector as a means to improve access.
1955	Pullen	(1) Establish community college system. (2) Urge all liberal arts institutions to bolster existing programs rather than undertaking rapid expansion. (3) Institutions should develop and utilize quantifiable admissions data to funnel students into appropriate institutions suited to their academic level. (4) Expand teacher education programs and professional schools and establish programs for librarians and social workers. (5) Encourage more Maryland youth to go into higher education through coordinated counseling programs and preferential admissions policies for residents. (6) Increase funding to state institutions. (7) Initiate a system of direct state scholarships. (8) Establish a permanent state advisory commission on higher education.	(1) yes (2) yes (3) none (4) in part (5) yes (6) yes (7) none (8) none	To explore ways to accommodate a dramatically increased student population.
1960	Warfield	(1) Expand University of Maryland. (2) Amalgamate 3 teachers colleges into the university.	(1) none (2) in part	To explore ways to accommodate more increases in enrollments. Discussion was centered around access and quality issues and how the University of Maryland could meet state needs.
1962	Curlett	(1) Establish a tripartite system whereby the state teachers colleges would enlarge their scope and mission to include general liberal arts curricula in addition to teacher training and thus become a state college system. The other two elements of the tripartite group were to be the existing community colleges and the University of Maryland. (2) Institute a single Board of Trustees for Morgan State College and the State Teachers Colleges. (3) Create a division of higher education within the state department of education with responsibility for the community colleges. (4) Maintain the Board of Regents of the University of Maryland. (5) Create an Advisory Council for Higher Education.	(1) yes (2) no (3) yes (4) yes (5) yes	To consider how to reorganize the state educational system and thereby meet state needs.

Table 10

Summary of Major Blue-Ribbon Commissions in Education in
New York State Prior to the Wessell Commission

Year	Commission	Recommendations	Effect	Purpose
1948	Young	(1) To remove the eleven state teachers colleges from under the purview of the Board of Regents and give these colleges their own Board of Trustees to be appointed by the governor.	(1) yes	To explore ways to accommodate increased enrollments and to promote access.
1959	Heald	(1) To exapnd the state university and community college system.	(1) yes	To meet the increasing demand for higher education in New York State.
1967	Bundy	(1) To establish a scale of financial support support to private or independent institutions based on the number and level of degrees conferred.	(1) yes	To preserve the strength and vitality of the private and independent institutions of higher education yet at the same time keep them free.
1972	Keppel	(1) To establish the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) which is a need-based entitlement program with awards limited to the size of tuition.	(1) yes	To look at higher education finance.

New York commissions each basically recommended one specific course of action for a single area of concern as contrasted with the Maryland experience. Maryland commissions appear to have suggested a variety of tasks to achieve the goal set for them. As can be noted, some of these were instituted; others were not. In addition, it is interesting that Wessell, unlike its predecessors was not effective by the definition used in this study. This prompts one to explore why. Part of the answer lies in the fiscal situation in New York State at the time of the Wessell commission as is detailed below.

Table 11 illustrates some salient points regarding the Wessell and Rosenberg Commissions.

Establishment of the Rosenberg and Wessell Commissions

Maryland and New York, along with the majority of other states across the country, were having to give consideration to a very different set of circumstances by the middle 1970s than they had faced a decade earlier. Six basic issues demanded attention. These were rising costs, enrollment decline, the consequences of retrenchment, unemployment, educational quality, and erosion of public trust.[1]

The Rosenberg Commission in Maryland was called in 1973 by Governor Mandel to review education in the state with regard to the continuing reorganization of state government into twelve departments

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[1] Alvin P. Lierheimer, "A Closer Look at Higher Education Governance," Inside Education, December 1977/January 1978, p. 6.

Table 11

General Comparison of Data Concerning the Wessell and Rosenberg Commissions

Wessell Commission	Rosenberg Commission
1. Purpose: To reexamine and reorder the governance and financing of higher education in New York State including the impact of the New York City fiscal crisis upon the City University.	1. Purpose: To study the organization of Maryland's educational enterprise.
2. Membership: 5 commissioners including a student, university president, lawyer, foundation president and vice president of the College Entrance Examination Board.	2. Membership: 27 commissioners including representatives of business, government, citizens, Blacks, women and former educators.
3. Appointment: Members appointed by Governor Hugh L. Carey in August 1976.	3. Appointment: Members appointed by Governor Maxium Mandel in January 1973.
4. Final Report: Issued in March 1977.	4. Final Report: Issued in May 1975.

each headed by its own secretary. In his letter of transmittal to the commission, Governor Mandel mentioned the "development of a state cabinet system" and the "escalating financial commitment of state and local governments to public education" as being two factors prompting the necessity for the Rosenberg Commission.[2]

Lucille Maurer, member of the Maryland House of Delegates and a Rosenberg Commissioner, notes that ". . . beyond cost factors is the question of whether the system has the inherent capability to respond, in timely fashion, to changing conditions."[3] Thus, the Rosenberg Commissioners were:

> asked to take a "fresh look" at the structure and governance of the entire spectrum of education and to make "workable" recommendations for change.[4]

This forward-looking next steps orientation of the Rosenberg Commission was not to be found in the reasons for the establishment of the Wessell Commission in New York. The major impetus for establishing the Wessell Commission was fiscal crisis. The City University of New York (CUNY), has been a tradition in New York City since 1847. It is the third largest university system in the nation, had always offered free tuition and, since 1969, has had an open-admissions policy which guaranteed admission to any graduate of a New York City high school.

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[2] Letter of January 9, 1973 from Governor Mandel to the Rosenberg Commissioners cited by Lucille Maurer, "Planning for New Directions in Education: The Rosenberg Commission," p. 21.

[3] Ibid., p. 22.

[4] Ibid., p. 21.

The City of New York had traditionally been the main funding agent. But 1975 was a particularly drastic year financially for New York City. On the brink of default, the city cut back $32 million from the CUNY budget which, when a variety of matching funds was taken into account, actually amounted to $64 million.[5]

In the Spring of 1976, New York City announced that its half share of funding the four CUNY senior colleges would cease in 1977-78 and that New York State would have to fill the breach. It was at this junction that Governor Carey appointed the Wessell Commission. The charge to the commission was broad and included a comprehensive study of postsecondary education in New York State, the role of the Board of Regents, the relationship of CUNY to the state, the city and to other institutions involving the private sector and the financing of CUNY.

Recommendations and Outcome of the Rosenberg and Wessell Commissions

Both the Rosenberg and Wessell Commissions put forth a series of recommendations for change in education within their respective states.

Rosenberg Commission

In brief, the Rosenberg Commission proposed the following system for education in the state. There would be two boards, a

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[5] Jay Hershenson, Wessell Commission, interview, New York City, December 1979.

State Board for Elementary and Secondary Education and a State Board for Higher Education. Each would have fifteen lay members appointed by the governor for six-year staggered terms. Inclusive in the board would be a member from each congressional district. Each board would be responsible for selecting its own chairman and its own commissioner--the latter being a professional educator.[6]

The two boards would meet together a minimum of four times annually as the Joint Education Board. This board would select three possible candidates for the position of Chairman of the Joint Education Board. No candidate was to be a member of either board, and final selection of this chairman would rest with the governor. The chairman would be a salaried and a full-time employee whose duties would include serving as the governor's cabinet member for education, presiding over meetings of the Joint Education Board only in cases where there is a tie and presenting and defending the budgets of the two state boards to the governor.[7]

The Joint Education Board should fulfill a coordinating function for the two separate boards.

The Rosenberg Commission proposed a series of councils be established by and report to the Joint Education Board. These councils were to be composed of both board and non-board members and were to

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[6] Final Report of the Governor's Commission on Education, by Leonard H. Rosenberg, Chaiman (Baltimore, Md.: 1513 State Office Building, 1975), p. 20.

[7] Ibid.

"assist the educational structure in coping with the complexities of the future."[8] The councils would have at least three functions:

> (1) To serve as a unit of educational governmental apparatus to plan, organize and monitor services which do not clearly fall within the separate purviews of elementary and secondary or postsecondary education;
> (2) To provide a stance of advocacy for students who have special needs and requirements that tend to be disregarded by the on-going system; and
> (3) To advocate reform and new procedures.[9]

Councils were to have their own staffs, but were not envisioned as being permanent bodies. Seven such councils were recommended although no limit was placed on the number at any one time.

The proposed restructuring of postsecondary education made by the Rosenberg Commission elicited concern from the affected parties. In the wake of public response to the commission report, the governor appointed a task force to review the recommendations.

The Wilner Task Force, officially entitled the Task Force to Evaluate the Final Report of the Governor's Study Commission on Structure and Governance of Education was composed of eleven members, seven of whom had served as members on the Rosenberg Commission. Among these eleven there were three senators and three delegates serving in the Maryland legislature.

Most people agreed that the commission had identified a number of problems that did need to be addressed, and that some of its recommendations were conceptually sound. The problem was in the specific solutions that were suggested. So wrote His Honor Alan M. Wilner, Judge, in the Maryland court of Special Appeals and Chairman of the task force appointed by the governor subsequent to the issuance of the Rosenberg Commission report. Wilner goes on to write,

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[8] Final Report of the Governor's Commission on Education, p. 22.

[9] Ibid.

> Our function was not to redo the work of the Rosenberg Commission, but rather to find a way to recast the basic recommendations of that commission so as to make them workable if adopted and palatable to the legislature.[10]

In other words, the Rosenberg Commission suggested and induced changes in the postsecondary system in Maryland while the Wilner Task Force operated as a vehicle set up to mediate between proposed change and entrenched interests. In the words of one person who served on both the commission and the task force and is also a member of the House of Delegates in the state, the legislative task force "greased the skids" for passage of change-producing legislation.

The task force held five public hearings in various locations plus three invitational hearings "at which representatives from the various educational institutions and agencies of the state and local governments presented their reactions to the Study Commission's recommendations as well as their own alternative proposals."[11] Additionally, various individuals, groups and agencies submitted letters and position papers. The Wilner Task Force addressed all and amended some of the recommendations of the Rosenberg Commission.

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[10] Alan M. Wilner, Judge, personal letter to Janet Rogers Clarke, February 21, 1980.

[11] Wilner, Task Force Report, p. 1.

Outcome: Senate Bill 347 was enacted by the Maryland General Assembly during the 1976 Regular Session. This legislation implemented the Wilner Task Force recommendations. By the definition of effectiveness used in this study, the Rosenberg Commission can be said to have been effective since it produced immediate and recognizable change to the postsecondary education structure, function, or processes in the state.

Wessell Commission

The Wessell Commission put forth five major recommendations. They dealt with the need for immediate assistance to the senior colleges of CUNY; a suggested restructuring of the State University of New York (SUNY) and CUNY "to preserve and enhance the quality, specific missions and tradition of access characteristic of public higher education in New York";[12] the enhancement of student access and opportunities; the maintenance and enhancement of the contributions of the private sector; and, the strengthening of the policy-making and planning functions of the State Board of Regents, "provided their effectiveness is improved by a new appointment procedure."[13]

Outcome: No part of the recommended procedure for providing financial assistance to CUNY was actualized until 1979 and was to commence in the 1980-81 fiscal year. This was more than twenty-eight months after the issuance of the final report of the Wessell Commission. The implemented plan began with a similar concept to the Wessell recommendation but extended and modified it over a three-year period to end in an ultimate state takeover of CUNY. The suggested restructuring of SUNY and CUNY was rejected in all its parts by the New York State legislature. The legislature did take positive action on one of the nine sections of the Wessell Commission recommendations regarding student access and opportunities by approving in 1978 the $300 increase in the award ceiling of the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP).[14]

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[12] Report of the Temporary State Commission on the Future of Postsecondary Education in New York State, by Nils Y. Wessell, Chairman (Albany, N.Y.: A. E. Smith State Office Building, 1977), p. 24.

[13] Ibid., p. 25.

One other section of this recommendation received legislative attention. The commission had recommended the elimination of the $100 minimum TAP award. The legislature, however, decided instead to double the amount. One section of the three that pertained to the commission recommendation concerning the private sector received legislative action. This section referred to the Bundy aid program.[15] In the 1977 and 1979 session, the legislature voted to increase the Bundy aid amount. The legislature rejected all parts of the recommendation suggesting changes in the responsibilities and appointment procedures of the State Board of Regents.

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[14] James Ruhl, senior aide to Senator Majority Leader Warren Anderson, New York, interview, Denver, Colorado, November 1979. TAP is a need-based entitlement program with awards limited to the size of tuition.

[15] Section 6401 of the Education Law (1968) brought into effect "Bundy Aid" which is a scale of financial support to private or independent institutions based on the level and number of degrees conferred.

Since the definition of an effective commission states that there must be immediate and recognizable change produced in great/some degree in the structure, function or processes of postsecondary education in a state, the Wessell Commission cannot be considered effective on the basis of the outcome of the recommendations.

Analysis of the Perceptions of Questionnaire Respondents

The purpose of this study is to determine what particular elements in the composition and process of a Blue-Ribbon Commission seemed to be related to its ultimate effectiveness. The perceptions of persons either involved or familiar with either the Wessell or the Rosenberg Commissions were solicited by questionnaire. The questions are contained in Appendix B.

In order to discern some of the possible conditions or elements that could have affected the relative effectiveness of the Rosenberg and Wessell Commissions, the perceptions of questionnaire respondents have been summarized within this chapter.

This chapter reports on the differences and similarities of perceptions between the two commissions for the entire set of respondents. Each table is composed of those questions belonging to one of the six topic areas on the questionnaire: commission; commissioners; staff; external elements; commission output; and, subsequent effect.

Each one of these topic areas relates to a hypothesis. The six hypotheses are:

1. the nature and characteristics of the commission approach to planning and problem solving would have an impact on effectiveness;
2. the commissioners would have an impact on the effectiveness of a commission by way of their selection, suitability, accessibility, amount of attention to the activities of the commission, their number of meetings and the leadership of their chairman;
3. the staff would have an impact on the effectiveness of a commission by way of their selection, number, skills, background, experience, accessibility, background research and ongoing research;
4. external elements including number of public hearings, use of testimony, media coverage and reaction, use of outside experts and involvement of the governor would have an impact on the effectiveness of a commission;
5. the commission output including such factors as the number of final recommendations of the commission which addressed the assigned objectives, the substantiation in the final report of the recommendations, the consideration given by the commission to the major affected interests (e.g., sectors) in its efforts towards implementation of the recommendations, the amount of activity of the

commissioners in the implementation process and whether the final report led to changes in policies and procedures by other than legislators, would have an impact on the effectiveness of a commission; and

6. there would be a difference in responses between an effective and an ineffective commission on the following points:
   a. subsequent change in postsecondary education was due to the work and recommendations of the commission;
   b. similar changes would have come about without the commission; and
   c. the influence of the commission on postsecondary education was constructive.

An additional analysis compares particular pairs of questions in order to ascertain how the relationship between these questions is affected by the perceptions of effective and ineffective majority responses of the respective commissions. The majorities are the respondents who agree with the majority of their fellow respondents of their respective commissions on the degree of subsequent change in postsecondary education being due to the work and recommendations of the commissions. In the context of this study effective implies great/some degree of subsequent change while ineffective implies minor or no change. By this definition, Rosenberg respondents perceived their commission as effective and Wessell respondents as ineffective.

There were three open-ended questions: (a) what do you think were the governor's reasons for establishing the commission? (b) under what conditions do you feel the commission and its report could have been more effective? and (c) further comments. The responses have been separated by type of respondent, i.e., commissioner, staff member, legislator, etc., and appear in Appendix D to the study.

General Analytical Procedures Used

In interpreting all the following analyses, one must take into account the small size of the two samples.

Twenty-eight responses were received from Wessell Commission respondents. Twenty-three responses were received from Rosenberg Commission respondents. One must, therefore, be cautious in stating too positively that there is any unequivocal evidence of cause and effect based upon the perceptions of these small, although select, populations.

The size of the sample populations obtained is smaller than generally recommended for conducting reliable statistical analyses using the usual techniques (Pearson Chi-squared analysis). Therefore, where possible, the query responses were dichotomized into positive and negative possible response categories. This enabled the use of a statistical procedure called Fisher's exact test, which is generally thought to be most appropriate for comparing dichotomized data for samples of this size.

The positive possible responses combined in the dichotomization can be inferred from the rephrasing of the question into a statement (appearing in the extreme left column of the first set of six tables). The "no opinion" responses are not included in these tables or statistical analyses.

The reference to statistical significance appearing in the tables is to the probability that the proportion of positive responses for each commission is not due to sampling error. The smaller the number, the more confident we can be that the difference between the commissions is not just an artifact of the sample. The standard level of 5 percent is generally used as a threshold value for deciding significance.

When dichotomization of the data is not possible, Pearson's Chi-squared test is used. This is the usual procedure when dealing with a large population and/or, as in this case, a series of foils, or answers, to each query.

It should be noted that the statistical significance of comparisons between the two commissions is dependent on the sample size. There are several examples in this study of differences between the two commissions which are not statistically significant at the 5 percent level but which are significant at a higher level (such as 10 percent). These comparisons may be considered indications of potentially important effects. It is possible that such comparisons might have been statistically significant at the 5 percent level if the sample size were larger and if the additional people reported in the same manner.

Multiple responses were possible on two questions, number 2 and number 13. Each required a different approach in analysis.

Question 2, which dealt with the clarity and attainability of the objectives placed before the commission, could be logically split into two parts. The first part was perceptions about the clarity of the objectives, while the second was perceptions about the attainability of those objectives. Details of this division are given in the discussion of Topic A: Commission.

Question 13 presented a different type of multiple response structure. This question dealt with the mechanisms involved in the selection of the staff. Here there was a linkage between the foils or opinion choices and, therefore, it was not possible to make a division within the question. Due to a preponderance of responses clustering about foil a (selection on the basis of merit), it was deemed advisable to center analysis around this choice as the focal issue.

Comparisons of Perceptions by Topic and Its Related Hypothesis Between the Rosenberg and Wessell Commissions for All Respondents

In this section the differences and similarities of perceptions between the entire set of Rosenberg and Wessell respondents are reported. The examination is by groupings of questions into six topic areas, each of which relates to a hypothesis.

These topical areas and hypotheses are:

Topic A: the commission in general.

Hypothesis: the nature and characteristics of the commission approach to planning and problem solving and would have an impact on effectiveness.

Topic B: commissioners constituting the commission.

Hypothesis: the commissioners would have an impact on the effectiveness of a commission by way of their selection, suitability, accessibility, amount of attention to the activities of the commission,their number of meetings and the leadership of their chairman.

Topic C: staff which supported the commission.

Hypothesis: the staff would have an impact on the effectiveness of a commission by way of their selection, number, skills, background, experience, accessibility, background research and ongoing research.

Topic D: external elements affecting the commission.

Hypothesis: external elements including number of public hearings, use of testimony, media coverage and reaction, use of outside experts and involvement of the governor would have an impact on the effectiveness of a commission.

Topic E: final recommendations produced by the commission.

Hypothesis: the commission output including such factors as the number of final recommendations of the commission which addressed the assigned objectives, the substantiation in the final report of the recommendations, the consideration given by the commission to the major affected interests (e.g., sectors) in its efforts towards implementation of the recommendations, the amount of activity of the commissioners in the implementation process and whether the final report led to changes in policies and procedures by other than legislators, would have an impact on the effectiveness of a commission.

Topic F: subsequent effect of the commission on postsecondary education.

Hypothesis: there would be a difference in responses between an effective and an ineffective commission on the following points: (a) that subsequent change in postsecondary education was due to the work and recommendations of the commission; (b) that similar changes would have come about without the commission; and (c) that the influence of the commission on postsecondary education was constructive.

Topic A: Commission

Tables 12 and 12a present the opinions of all Rosenberg and Wessell respondents on questions relating to their respective commissions in general. These include the appropriateness of the commission, the objectives given, the length of time allotted, the delays experienced in beginning operations and the funds provided.

Table 12

Responses to Questions About Perceptions of
Topic A: Commission

Questions	Rosenberg		Wessell	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1. The utilization of a Blue-Ribbon commission rather than another type of agency or structure (such as a task force or legislative subcommittee study) was				
a. more appropriate to address the issues	14	66.67	10	40.00
b. equally appropriate	6	28.57	11	44.00
c. not as appropriate	1	4.76	4	16.00
d. no opinion	2	- *	3	-
2. The objectives of the commission were **				
a. clear and precise	9	36.00	11	33.33
b. not sufficiently focused	6	24.00	8	24.24
c. seemed attainable	8	32.00	5	15.15
d. seemed unattainable	2	8.00	9	27.27
e. no opinion	1	-	0	-
3. The length of time allotted for the commission to complete its report was				
a. more than adequate	8	36.36	1	3.57
b. adequate	13	59.09	5	17.86
c. less than adequate	1	4.55	22	78.57
d. no opinion	1	-	0	-

Table 12 (continued)

Questions	Rosenberg Number	Rosenberg Percent	Wessell Number	Wessell Percent
4. The delay experienced by the commission in getting organized, staffed and beginning operations was				
a. great	3	18.75	4	17.39
b. some	11	68.75	15	65.22
c. little	2	12.50	4	17.39
d. none	0	0	0	0
e. no opinion	7	-	5	-
5. Did the commission have sufficient funds to successfully accomplish its objectives?				
a. yes	16	100.00	16	88.89
b. no	0	0	2	11.11
c. no opinion	7	-	10	-

*No opinion responses omitted.

**the responses to this question were divided by facet for this summarization.

Table 12a

(Dichotomized) Responses to Questions About
Perceptions of Topic A: Commission*

	Rosenberg				Wessell				
	Yes		No		Yes		No		
Questions	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	Significance
1.. The utilization of a Blue-Ribbon commission was at least as appropriate as any other structure to address the issues.	20	95.24	1	4.76	21	84.00	4	16.00	.356
2A. The objectives of the commission were clear and precise.	9	60.00	6	40.00	11	57.89	8	42.11	.590
2B. The objectives of the commission seemed attainable.	8	80.00	2	20.00	4	28.57	10	71.43	.036
3. The length of time allotted for the commission to complete its report was at least adequate.	21	95.45	1	4.55	6	21.43	22	78.57	p <.001
4. The commission experienced at least some delay in getting underway.	14	87.50	2	12.50	19	82.61	4	17.39	1.000
5. The commission had sufficient funds.	16	100.00	0	0.0	16	88.89	2	11.11	.486

*No opinion responses omitted.

Table 12 provides the complete responses while Table 12a provides the responses dichotomized into positive and negative categories.

Because of multiple responses to Question 2, it was split into two logical components as shown in Table 12a.

Of the twenty-eight respondents on the Wessell Commission, five respondents chose two choices for Question 2, which dealt with the clarity and attainability of the objectives placed before the commission. Two of these reported that the objectives of the commission were clear and precise but that they seemed unattainable. An additional two also reported that the objectives were not sufficiently focused. The remaining respondent reported the objectives to be clear and precise and seemingly attainable.

Of the twenty-three Rosenberg respondents, three respondents chose two choices on Question 2. All three reported the objectives to be clear and precise. Two also reported that they seemed unattainable, while the remaining respondents reported that the objectives were attainable. Because there were some multiple responses to Question 2, and because foils a and b could logically be separated from foils c and d, Question 2 was separated into two parts for analysis. The parts are: 2A which consists of all responses involving a and b, and 2B consisting of all responses involving foils c and d. The numbers reported for the various foils of 2A and 2B are counts of the number of responses to those foils. A respondent reporting opinions to foils in both 2A and 2B is counted in both parts. A respondent who selected only one foil (e.g., a in 2A), is assumed to have no opinion on the foils in the complementary part (in this case 2B).

Topic A: commission summary. It would appear that those respondents familiar with the Rosenberg Commission work in Maryland held a far more positive view about the efficiency of using that particular form of study as opposed to any other. By contrast the respondees, regarding the Wessell Commission in New York, leaned slightly away from this view and tended to favor the utilization of a Blue-Ribbon commission no more nor no less than other alternate structures which could be used to address specific issues.

With regard to the delineation of objectives assigned to the commission, the Wessell respondees, while reporting that the objectives were clear and precise, also tended to indicate that they also were not sufficiently focused and were also unattainable. Rosenberg respondees also perceived clarity in the objectives coupled with a lack of focus but a far lower percentage of these respondees felt that the objectives were unattainable. A striking contrast becomes apparent when considering responses to the query of allotted time for study completion. Almost overwhelmingly, the Wessell respondees chose to describe the allotted time frame of the commission as less than adequate, quite the opposite of the Rosenberg respondees regarding that commission. Both groups of respondees did concur with the sentiment that there were some delay experienced by the respective commissions in getting organized, staffed and underway.

Likewise, the majority of respondents for both commissions agreed that there was sufficient funding for the commission to successfully accomplish its objectives.

It appears that within Topic A dealing with the commission in general there were no striking dissimilarities in outlook between Rosenberg and Wessell respondents with regard to the utility of a Blue-Ribbon commission, the objectives of the respective commissions, the amount of delay associated with commencing the study, or with the sufficiency of available funding. There was, however, a great discrepancy of opinion with regard to the adequacy of the time in which the study was to be completed and in the attainability of the objectives.

Topic B: Commissioners

Tables 13 and 13a present the opinions of all Rosenberg and Wessell respondents to questions relating to characteristics of the commissioners. These questions probed whether the major affected interests were considered in the selection of the commissioners, how well suited the commissioners were to handle the issues, how much attention they gave to commission activities, the adequacy of the number of times they met, the accessibility of the commissioners to persons wishing to comment, and the quality of leadership provided by the commission chairman.

Table 13 provides the complete responses while Table 13a provides the responses in a positive/negative dichotomization.

Topic B: commissioners summary. Both Rosenberg and Wessell Commission respondents appeared to be satisfied that the criteria for

Table 13

Responses to Questions About Perceptions of
Topic B: Commissioners

Questions	Rosenberg		Wessell	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
6. Did the selection of the commissioners take into account the major affected interests? (e.g., sectors, university systems)				
a. yes	15	75.00	18	69.23
b. no	5	25.00	8	30.77
c. no opinion	3	-*	2	-
7. How suited were the commissioners to handle the issues				
a. well suited to perform their required function	15	78.95	13	56.52
b. poorly suited to perform their required functions	4	21.05	10	43.48
c. no opinion (and varied substantially)	4	-	5	-
8. The amount of attention to the commission's activities given by the commissioners was				
a. great	13	76.47	2	11.76
b. moderate	4	23.53	12	70.59
c. small	0	0	3	17.65
d. negligible	0	0	0	0
e. no opinion (and varied substantially)	6	-	11	-

Table 13 (continued)

Questions	Rosenberg		Wessell	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
9. The number of times the commissioners met was				
a. more than enough	5	35.71	0	0
b. less than enough	0	0	9	52.94
c. enough	9	64.29	8	47.06
d. no opinion	9	-	11	-
10. How accessible were the commissioners to persons wishing to comment?				
a. always	6	31.58	3	15.00
b. often	12	63.16	9	45.00
c. seldom	1	5.26	6	30.00
d. never	0	0	2	10.00
e. no opinion	4	-	8	-
11. The leadership provided to the commission by its chairman was				
a. excellent	7	38.89	2	9.52
b. good	5	27.78	8	38.10
c. fair	6	33.33	6	28.57
d. poor	0	0	5	23.81
e. no opinion	5	-	7	-

*No opinion not included in percentages.

Table 13a

(Dichotomized) Responses to Questions About Perceptions of Topic B: Commissioners*

	Rosenberg				Wessell				
	Yes		No		Yes		No		
Questions	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	Significance
6. The selection of commissioners took into account the major affected interests.	15	75.00	5	25.00	18	69.23	8	30.77	.749
7. The commissioners were well suited to perform their required function.	15	78.95	4	21.05	13	56.52	10	43.48	.190
8. The commissioners gave at least moderate attention to the commission's activities.	17	100.00	0	0.0	14	82.35	3	17.65	.227
9. The commissioners met enough times.	14	100.00	0	0.0	8	47.06	9	52.94	.001
10. The commissioners were accessible to persons wishing to comment.	18	94.74	1	5.26	12	60.00	8	40.00	.019
11. The chairman provided good to excellent leadership to the commission.	12	66.67	6	33.33	10	47.62	11	52.38	.334

*No opinion responses omitted.

selection of the commissioners did take into account the major affected interests within the respective states.

A higher percentage of Maryland respondents perceived the commissioners to be well suited to perform their required function than did New York respondents. As could be expected, an equally higher percentage of New York respondents felt that the commissioners were poorly suited in this regard. (This difference, however, was not significant statistically.) Somewhat more of the Maryland respondents felt positively disposed to the amount of attention accorded to commission activities on the part of the commissioners than did their counterparts in New York. In terms of both the sufficiency of the number of meetings of the commissioners and their accessibility to persons wishing to comment to them, a striking difference arises between the Rosenberg respondents' perceptions and those of the Wessell respondents. A far greater number of New York respondents perceived the Wessell commissioners as meeting too few times than did the Rosenberg respondents for that commission. In like manner more Wessell respondents perceived the commissioners as being less accessible to persons wishing to comment than did Rosenberg respondents.

The majority of responses of Rosenberg respondents concerning the quality of the chairman's leadership fell within the good/excellent range. The majority of the Wessell responses to the same query fell within the fair/poor range. The difference was not significant statistically. However, more of the Rosenberg responses indicated excellent leadership and none indicated poor leadership (although a number of the Wessell respondents thought that leadership was poor). Therefore, the most important distinctions in Topic B: Commissioners, appear to deal with the number of times these persons met together and their accessibility to others.

Topic C: Staff

Tables 14 and 14a present the opinions of all Rosenberg and Wessell respondents to questions relating to the staff which supported the commission. These questions were concerned with the sufficiency of the number of staff provided, the mechanisms for the selection of the staff, the skills, background and experience of the staff, the accessibility of the staff to persons wishing to comment, the quality of the background work done by the staff, and whether the staff conducted relevant research.

Similarly to the other topics, Table 14 provides the complete responses while Table 14a gives the dichotomized responses. Detailed discussion of each question follows the tables.

Multiple responses were received on Question 13, the mechanisms involved in the selection of the staff. Generally, the multiple responses were choices of merit plus some other mechanism (generally, political relationship). Because of the strong clustering on merit as a factor and relatively weaker clustering on the remaining categories, it was deemed appropriate to dichotomize this query into merit alone versus merit and/or other factors. Respondents who selected

Table 14

Responses to Questions About Perceptions of Topic C: Staff

Questions	Rosenberg		Wessell	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
12. Was the number of staff assigned to the commission sufficient to complete the assignment in the time allotted?				
a. yes	14	100.00	12	52.17
b. no	0	0	11	47.83
c. no opinion	9	- *	5	-
13. The staff was chosen on the basis of **				
a. merit	13	81.25	8	38.10
b. political relationship	1	6.25	1	4.76
c. both	2	12.50	7	33.33
d. neither	0	0	1	4.76
e. other	0	0	4	19.05
f. no opinion	7	-	10	-
14. The skills, background and experience of the staff are				
a. excellent	8	53.33	1	5.26
b. good	5	33.33	15	78.95
c. fair	0	0	3	15.79
d. poor	2	13.33	0	0
e. no opinion	8	-	9	-

Table 14 (continued)

Questions	Rosenberg Number	Rosenberg Percent	Wessell Number	Wessell Percent
15. How accessible was the staff to persons wishing to comment?				
a. always	11	68.75	11	50.00
b. often	4	25.00	9	40.91
c. seldom	1	6.25	1	4.55
d. never	0	0	1	4.55
e. no opinion	7	-	6	-
16. The depth and breadth of the background research conducted by the staff was				
a. great	7	43.75	3	12.50
b. moderate	7	43.75	10	41.67
c. small	0	0	11	45.83
d. negligible	2	12.50	0	0
e. no opinion	7	-	4	-
17. For the duration of the study relevant research (surveys, data gathering, etc.) was conducted by the staff				
a. as an ongoing process	11	73.33	11	57.89
b. intermittently	2	13.33	7	36.84
c. hardly at all	1	6.67	1	5.26
d. other	1	6.67	0	0
e. no opinion	8	-	9	-

*No opinion responses omitted.

**In this table, respondents to Question 13 are only counted once. Respondents with an opinion who chose any options other than, or in addition, to, "merit" are counted in the "no" category.

Table 14a

(Dichotomized) Responses to Questions About Perceptions of Topic C: Staff*

	Rosenberg				Wessell				
	Yes		No		Yes		No		
Questions	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	Significance
12. The number of staff was sufficient.	14	=	0	0.0	12	52.17	11	47.83	.002
13. The staff was chosen on basis of merit alone.**	13	81.25	3	18.75	6	33.33	12	66.67	.006
14. The skills, background and experience of the staff was excellent or good.	13	86.67	2	13.33	16	84.21	3	15.79	1.000
15. The staff was often or always accessible to persons wishing to comment.	15	93.75	1	6.25	20	90.91	2	9.09	1.000
16. There was great to moderate depth and breadth to the background research conducted by the staff.	14	87.50	2	12.50	13	54.17	11	45.83	.040
17. For the duration of the study relevant research was conducted by the staff at least intermittently.	13	86.67	2	13.33	18	94.74	1	5.26	.409

*No opinion responses omitted.

**In this table, respondents to Question 13 are only counted once. Respondents with an opinion who chose any options other than, or in addition to, "merit" are counted in the "no" category.

merit and an additional factor were considered to be in the latter category.

Topic C: staff summary. There was no dissenting voice from among the Rosenberg respondents regarding there being sufficient number of staff assigned to that commission. Far fewer of the Wessell respondents felt likewise and the statistical significance of the difference was below the 1 percent level.

Another highly significant statistical difference can be noticed in examining perceptions about how the staff was chosen. Very few of the Rosenberg respondents indicated that bases other than merit alone were used, while two thirds of the Wessell respondents held this view. Rosenberg respondents judged the skills, background and experience of the staff as being excellent to good while the Wessell respondents' judgments were concentrated in the good to fair range. The staff was viewed by the majoirty of both sets of respondents as being either, always or often accessible to persons wishing to comment. In like manner, the majority of both sets of respondents indicated that relevant research had been conducted by the staff as an ongoing process for the duration of the study. A significant difference became apparent in the range of responses dealing with the depth and breadth of the background research conducted by the staff. A large majority of Rosenberg respondents perceived the amount of staff research as falling into the great to moderate categories whereas a substantive number of Wessell respondents perceived only a small degree of depth and breadth in the staff conducted background research.

Emergent differences are, therefore, most striking in terms of the perceptions of respondents regarding the number of staff assigned to the respective commissions, the mechanisms for selecting the staff, and the depth and breadth of background research conducted by staff.

Topic D: External Elements

Responses to questions concerning external elements affecting the commission are given in Tables 15 and 15a. These questions cover the frequency of public hearings and the consideration afforded the testimony from these hearings, the extent that media coverage was sought and the reaction of the media to the commission, the use of experts other than staff or commission members, and the involvement of the governor in the work of the commission.

As in previous topics, the first table (15) presents the complete responses of all Rosenberg and Wessell respondents while the second gives the dichotomized responses. Likewise, the summary of findings relative to Tables 15 and 15a follows.

Topic D: external elements summary. The majority of both sets of respondents indicated that there was a sufficient number of public hearings during the life of the respective commissions.

A striking discrepancy in perceptions arises in relation to the query dealing with the usage of testimony from public hearings. Rosenberg respondents perceived such testimony as carrying equal weight along with other research in the deliberations of the

Table 15

Responses to Questions About Perceptions of Topic D: External Elements

Questions	Rosenberg Number	Rosenberg Percent	Wessell Number	Wessell Percent
18. During the life of the commission, public hearings were held				
a. too frequently	0	0	2	11.11
b. just about the right frequency	18	90.00	13	72.22
c. too rarely	2	10.00	3	16.67
d. no opinion	3	-*	10	-
19. Testimony from public hearings was				
a. relied upon heavily	1	5.00	0	0
b. considered along with other research	16	80.00	8	42.11
c. considered only when politically necessary	2	10.00	7	36.84
d. ignored	1	5.00	4	21.05
e. no opinion	3	-	9	-
20. To what extent did the commission seek media coverage?				
a. great	0	0	4	16.67
b. some	12	75.00	9	37.50
c. small	4	25.00	7	29.17
d. none	0	0	4	16.67
e. no opinion	7	-	4	-

Table 15 (continued)

Questions	Rosenberg		Wessell	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
21. Reaction in the media to the commission was				
a. favorable	14	93.33	2	13.33
b. unfavorable	1	6.67	13	86.67
c. no opinion (and other)	8	-	13	-
22. Were experts other than commission members and staff used repeatedly?				
a. yes	14	82.35	8	47.06
b. no	3	17.65	9	52.94
c. no opinion	6	-	11	-
23. The involvement of the governor in the work of the commission was				
a. avid	1	5.56	3	16.67
b. mild	9	50.00	12	66.67
c. nil	8	44.44	3	16.67
d. no opinion	5	-	10	-

*No opinion not included in percentages.

Table 15a

(Dichotomized) Responses to Questions About Perceptions of Topic D: External Elements

Questions	Rosenberg				Wessell				Significance
	Yes		No		Yes		No		
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
18. Public hearings were held frequently.	18	90.00	2	10.00	15	83.33	3	16.67	.652
19. Testimony from public hearings was relied upon or considered with other research.	17	85.00	3	15.00	8	42.11	11	57.89	.006
20. The commission sought media coverage to at least some extent.	12	75.00	4	25.00	13	54.177	11	45.83	.317
21. Reaction in the media to the commission was favorable.	14	93.33	1	6.67	2	13.33	13	86.67	p<.001
22. There was repeated use of experts other than commission members and staff.	14	82.35	3	17.65	8	47.06	9	52.94	.070
23. Involvement of the governor was mild to avid.	10	55.56	8	44.44	15	83.33	3	16.67	.071

commission. More than half of the Wessell respondents, however, reported that public hearing testimony was either ignored completely or considered only when politically necessary.

The majority of both Rosenberg and Wessell respondees perceived their respective commissions as seeking coverage to some extent. Although, Wessell respondees in nearly equal numbers, categorized the amount of time and interest the commission devoted to the media as small.

The two sets of respondents perceived media reaction to the commissions in quite opposite fashion with the Rosenberg respondents reporting favorably in their perception of media reaction and the Wessell respondents perceiving the media reaction as unfavorable. Respondent reaction to the query concerning the repeated use of experts other than commission members and staff yielded an interesting dichotomy of responses. The strong majority of Rosenberg respondents indicated that experts were used repeatedly while a bare majority of Wessell respondents indicated that experts were not utilized repeatedly.

In terms of the involvement of the governor in the work of the commission, the majority of Wessell respondents perceived the governor's involvement as veing mild while the majority of Rosenberg respondents were divided between perceiving the governor as having been mildly involved or not at all involved.

Topic E: Commission Output

This topic concerns the final recommendations produced by the commissions. All Rosenberg and Wessell respondents were asked their opinions on how many of the final recommendations addressed the governors' objectives, whether the final report substantiated these recommendations, whether the major affected interests were considered in efforts towards implementation of the recommendations, how active the commissioners were in seeking implementation, and whether the final report led to changes in policy and procedures by other legislators.

The complete responses are provided in Table 16 with dichotomized responses in Table 16a. A detailed discussion follows.

Topic E: commission output summary. While the majority of both the Rosenberg and Wessell respondents reported that some of the final recommendations addressed the objectives outlined by the governor more than twice as many Rosenberg respondents as Wessell respondents indicated that all of the final recommendations addressed the governor's outlined objectives.

The two respondent groups were strongly opposed in their opinions as to whether or not the final report amply substantiated the recommendations. A highly significant statistical difference was apparent in relation to this query with the majority of Rosenberg respondents reporting positively and the majority of Wessell respondents reporting negatively.

Table 16

Responses to Questions About Perceptions
of Topic E: Commissioner Outputs

Questions	Rosenberg		Wessell	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
24. How many of the final recommendations addressed the objectives outlined by the governor?				
a. all	7	35.00	3	12.00
b. some	12	60.00	18	72.00
c. few	1	5.00	4	16.00
d. none	0	0	0	0
e. no opinion (and other)	3	-*	3	-
25. The final report of the commission amply substantiated the recommendations				
a. yes	12	63.16	6	25.00
b. no	7	36.84	18	75.00
c. no opinion	4	-	4	-
26. The political potency of the major affected interests (e.g., sectors) was considered by the commission in its efforts towards implementation of the final recommendations				
a. to a great extent	9	45.00	3	11.11
b. somewhat	8	40.00	9	33.33
c. hardly at all	3	15.00	8	29.63
d. not at all	0	0	7	25.93
e. no opinion	3	-	1	-

Table 16 (continued)

Questions	Rosenberg		Wessell	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
27. How active were the majority of the commissioners in seeking implementation of the final recommendations?				
a. very	1	5.56	0	0
b. generally	8	44.44	3	13.04
c. minimally	6	33.33	13	56.52
d. negligibly	3	16.67	7	30.43
e. no opinion	5	-	5	-
28. The commission report led to changes in policies and procedures by other than legislators				
a. yes	18	81.82	5	19.23
b. no	4	18.18	21	80.77
c. no opinion (and other)	1	-	2	-

*No opinion not included in percentages.

Table 16a

(Dichotomized) Responses to Questions About Perceptions of Topic E: Commission Output

	Rosenberg				Wessell				
	Yes		No		Yes		No		
Questions	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	Significance
24. The final recommendations addressed all or some of the objectives.	19	95.00	1	5.00	21	84.00	4	16.00	.362
25. The final report of the commission amply substantiated the recommendations.	12	63.16	7	36.84	6	25.00	18	75.00	.015
26. The political potency of major affected interests was at least somewhat considered by the commission in its efforts towards implementation of the final recommendations.	17	85.00	3	15.00	12	44.44	15	55.56	.006
27. The majority of the commissioners were at least generally active in seeking implementation of the final recommendations.	9	50.00	9	50.00	3	13.04	20	86.96	.015
28. The commission report led to changes in policies and procedures by other than legislators.	18	81.82	4	18.18	5	19.23	21	80.77	p<.001

Likewise, a highly significant statistical difference emerges between the Rosenberg and Wessell respondents in their opinions as to the degree of consideration given to the political potency of the major affected interests (e.g., sectors) by the commission in its efforts towards implementation of the final recommendations.

Three times as many Rosenberg respondents than Wessell perceived that such consideration had been given to a great extent by the commission. At the other end of the scale, however, slightly more than a quarter of all the Wessell respondents with an opinion compared with none of the Rosenberg respondents reported that the commission had not at all considered the political potency of the major affected interests in its efforts towards implementation of the final recommendations.

The majority of Wessell respondents were negatively disposed in their opinions with regard to the level of activity of the majority of the commissioners in seeking implementation of the final recommendations. A large majority opted to describe this level of activity as either minimal or negligible, quite the opposite of the Rosenberg respondents of whom half selected the descriptors of "very" and "generally" when referring to the level of commissioner activity in this regard. A significant statistical difference thus became discernible between the two groups of respondents.

Comparison of responses to the final question within this target topic again yields a highly significant statistical difference with the majority of Rosenberg respondents indicating that indeed the commission report did lead to changes in policies and procedures by other than legislators while the majority of Wessell respondents indicated that no such changes came about.

In conclusion, it is evident that the Rosenberg respondents differ radically from the Wessell respondents in their opinions on several of the queries in this topic concerned with commission output. The majority of Rosenberg respondents as opposed to the majority of the Wessell respondents indicated that the final report of the commission amply substantiated the recommendations; the political potency of the major affected interests (e.g., sectors) was somewhat/to a great extent considered by the commission in its efforts towards implementation of the final recommendations; the majority of commissioners were generally/very active in seeking implementation of the final recommendations; and the commission report led to changes in policies and procedures by other than legislators.

Topic F: Subsequent Effect

The last topic addresses the subsequent effects on postsecondary education perceived by the respondents from the two commissions. The various subsequent effects addressed were the degree that subsequent change in postsecondary education was due to the work and recommendations of the commission, whether similar changes would have occurred without the commission and if the influence of the commission was constructive.

As in previous target topics, the first table (17) gives complete responses while the second (17a) gives dichotomized responses.

Table 17

Responses to Questions About Perceptions of Topic F: Subsequent Effect

Questions	Rosenberg		Wessell	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
29. To what degree was subsequent change in postsecondary education due to the work and recommendations of the commission?				
a. great	8	34.78	0	0
b. some	11	47.83	3	11.11
c. minor	3	13.04	8	29.63
d. none	1	4.35	16	59.26
e. no opinion	0	-*	1	-
30. Similar changes would have come about even if the commission had not been called into being				
a. yes	3	13.64	12	54.55
b. some	15	68.18	6	27.27
c. no	4	18.18	4	18.18
d. no opinion	1	-	6	-
31. The influence of the commission on postsecondary education was				
a. constructive	19	82.61	7	28.00
b. destructive	2	8.70	3	12.00
c. none	2	8.70	15	60.00
d. no opinion	0	-	3	-

*No opinion not included in percentages.

Table 17a

(Dichotomized) Responses to Questions About Perceptions of Topic F: Subsequent Effect

Questions	Rosenberg				Wessell				Significance
	Yes		No		Yes		No		
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
29. Subsequent change in post-secondary education was due to the work and recommendations of the commission to at least some degree.	19	82.61	4	17.39	3	11.11	24	88.89	p <.001
30. At least some similar changes would have come about without the commission being called into being.*	18	81.82	4	18.18	18	81.82	4	18.18	1.000
31. The influence of the commission was constructive.	19	82.61	4	17.40	7	28.00	18	72.00	p <.001
30A. Dichotomization of positive responses to 30 into their parts ("yes" and "some").*	3	16.67	15	83.33	12	66.67	6	33.00	p<.001

*No opinion responses omitted.

One of the questions (Question 29), concerning the degree that subsequent change in postsecondary education was due to the work and recommendations of the commission, is pivotal. If an effective commission is defined to be one where the work and recommendations of that commission produces at least some change, then it will be seen that the majority of the Rosenberg respondents perceived their commission as effective. Conversely, the majority of the Wessell respondents will be seen to perceive their commission as ineffective.

Topic F: subsequent effect summary. Rosenberg and Wessell respondents exhibit a dichotomy of opinion with regard to the degree that subsequent change in postsecondary education was due to the work and recommendations of the respective commissions. The Rosenberg respondents, with only four exceptions out of twenty-three, reported that the degree of subsequent change was some/great. By contrast, the Wessell respondents, with only four exceptions out of twenty-eight, reported that the degree of subsequent change was minor/none.

Both the majority of Rosenberg and Wessell respondents indicated that similar changes would have come about even if the commission had not been called into being. However, it is interesting to note that the heaviest concentration of Rosenberg respondents qualified their answer by selecting the descriptor "some" whereas the bulk of the Wessell respondents selected the outright "yes" denoting that unqualifiably similar changes would have come about without the commission.

With reference to the influence of the commission on postsecondary education, the two groups of respondents were again dichotomized in their respective responses. The Rosenberg respondents concentrated at the positive end of the possible responses and reported that the influence of the commission on postsecondary education had been constructive. The majority of Wessell respondents instead reported that the influence of the commission was none on postsecondary education. A small proportion of each group felt the influence was destructive.

Comparison of Responses of Respondents Who Agreed With the Majority of Their Colleagues on the Effectiveness of Their Commission Who Also Had Opinions on Given Pairs of Queries

Tables 18 through 24 present comparisons of responses to selected pairs of dichotomized questions by respondents who agreed with the majority of their colleagues on the effectiveness of their commission. For a given pair of questions, only respondents with opinions to both questions, who also agreed with the majority of their peers, are considered.

The purpose of this comparison is to determine if there is a relationship between responses to selected pairs of questions and if this relationship is dependent on the respondent's commission. Since all included respondents from the Rosenberg Commission considered their commission to be effective and all included respondents from the Wessell Commission considered their commission to be ineffective,

Table 18

Comparison of Respondents Agreeing With the Majority of Their Colleagues on the Effectiveness of Their Commission Who Also Had Opinions on Queries (Questions 6 and 27)

6: the selection of the commissioners took the political potency of major affected interests into account and

27: the political potency of the major affected interests was at least somewhat considered by the commission in efforts to implment the final recommendations.

Questions		Rosenberg Commission					Wessell Commission					Signif-icance
		Yes		No		Total	Yes		No		Total	
		#	%	#	%		#	%	#	%		
Question 6:	Selection of commissioners took the political potency of the major affected interests into account											
	1. total of all with opinions on questions 6 and 26	12	80.00	3	20.00	15	16	69.57	7	30.43	22	.48
	2. total of respondents perceiving that political potency of major interests was considered in implementation of final recommendations	11	84.62	2	15.38	13	6	66.67	3	33.33	9	.32
	3. total of respondents perceiving that political potency of major interests was not considered in implementation	1	50.00	1	50.00	2	10	71.43	4	28.57	14	.54
Question 27:	Political potency of major interests considered in implementation of final recommendations											
	1. total of all with opinions on questions 27 and 6	13	86.67	2	13.33	15	9	39.13	14	60.87	23	.004
	2. total of respondents perceiving that selection of commissioners took political potency of major interests into account	11	91.67	1	8.33	12	6	37.50	10	62.50	16	.004
	3. total of respondents perceiving selection of commissioners did not take political potency of major interests into account	2	66.67	1	33.33	3	3	42.86	4	57.14	7	.49

Table 19

Comparison of Respondents Agreeing With the Majority of Their Colleagues on the Effectiveness of Their Commission Who Also Had Opinions on Queries (Questions 8 and 28)

8: at least moderate attention to the commission's activity was given by the commissioners and

28: the commissioners were generally active in seeking implementation of the final recommendations.

Questions		Rosenberg Commission					Wessell Commission					Significance
		Yes		No			Yes		No			
		#	%	#	%	Total	#	%	#	%	Total	
Question 8:	Commissioners gave at least moderate attention to commission's activities											
	1. total of all with opinions on questions 8 and 28	14	100.00	0	0	14	11	84.62	2	15.38	13	13
	2. total of respondents who perceived that commissioners were active in seeking implementation	8	100.00	0	0	8	1	100.00	0	0	1	NC*
	3. total of respondents who perceived that the activity of the commissioners was no more than minimal	6	100.00	0	0	6	10	83.33	2	16.67	12	.29
Question 28:	The commissioners were generally active in seeking implementation of the final recommendations											
	1. total of all with opinions on questions 28 and 8	8	57.14	6	42.86	14	1	7.69	12	92.31	13	.007
	2. total of respondents who perceived at least moderate attention to the commission's activity was given by the commissioners	8	57.14	6	42.86	14	1	9.09	10	90.91	11	.01
	3. total of respondents perceiving that commissioners gave little attention to commission activities	0	-	0	-	0	0	0	2	100.00	2	NC

*NC = Not Computable

Table 20

Comparison of Respondents Argreeing With the Majority of Their Colleagues on the Effectiveness of Their Commission Who Also Had Opinions on Queries (Questions 13 and 16)

13. the staff was chosen on the basis of merit alone (vs. on the basis of politics or politics and merit) and

16: the depth and breadth of background research conducted by the staff was least moderate.

Questions	Rosenberg Commission					Wessell Commission					Significance
	Yes		No		Total	Yes		No		Total	
	#	%	#	%		#	%	#	%		
Question 13: Staff chosen only on merit											
1. total of all with opinions on questions 13 and 16	12	85.71	2	14.29	14	6	50.00	6	50.00	12	.05
2. total of respondents perceiving that the depth/breadth of background research by staff was moderate or better	12	92.31	1	7.69	13	5	71.43	2	28.57	7	.21
3. total of respondents perceiving the depth/breadth of background research was small or negligible	0	0	1	100.00	1	1	20.00	4	80.00	5	.62
Question 16: The depth/breadth of background research by staff was great/moderate											
1. total of all with opinions of questions 16 and 13	13	92.86	1	7.14	14	7	58.33	5	41.67	12	.04
2. total of respondents perceiving the staff was chosen on the basis of merit alone	12	100.00	0	0	12	5	83.33	1	16.67	6	.15
3. total of respondents perceiving the selection of staff involved political relationship	1	50.00	1	50.00	2	2	33.33	4	66.67	6	.68

Table 21

Comparison of Respondents Agreeing With the Majority of Their Colleagues on the Effectiveness of Their Commission Who Also Had Opinions on Queries (Questions 13 and 14)

13: the staff was chosen on the basis of merit alone (vs. on the basis of political relationship) and
14: the skills, background and experience of the staff were good (to excellent).

Questions		Rosenberg Commission					Wessell Commission					Significance
		#	%	#	%	Total	#	%	#	%	Total	
Question 13:	Staff chosen only on merit											
	1. total of all with opinions on questions 13 and 14	12	85.71	2	14.29	14	6	50.00	6	50.00	12	.05
	2. total of respondents who perceived the skills, background, experiences of staff were good	11	91.67	1	8.33	12	5	45.45	6	54.55	11	.02
	3. total of respondents who perceived the skills, background, experiences of staff were fair or poor	1	50.00	1	50.00	2	1	100.00	0	0	1	.40
Question 14:	The skills, background and experiences of the staff were good (to excellent)											
	1. total of all with opinions on questions 14 and 13	12	85.71	2	14.29	14	11	91.67	1	8.33	12	.64
	2. total of respondents who perceived the staff was selected on the basis of merit alone	11	91.67	1	8.33	12	5	83.33	1	16.67	6	.60
	3. total of respondents who perceived the selection of staff involved political relationship	1	50.00	1	50.00	2	6	100.00	0	0	6	.07

Table 22

Comparison of Respondents Agreeing With the Majority of Their Colleagues on the Effectiveness of Their Commission Who Also Had Opinions on Queries (Questions 18 and 19)

18: public hearing were held frequently and
19: testimony was relied on heavily or considered with other research.

Questions	Rosenberg Commission					Wessell Commission					Signif-icance
	Yes		No		Total	Yes		No		Total	
	#	%	#	%		#	%	#	%		
Question 18: Public hearings were held frequently											
1. total of all with opinions on questions 18 and 19	14	87.50	2	12.50	16	12	80.00	3	20.00	15	.57
2. total of respondents who perceived testimony was relied on heavily or considered with other research	13	92.86	1	7.14	14	5	83.33	1	16.67	6	.52
3. total of respondents who perceived testimony was ignored or considered only when politically necessary	1	50.00	1	50.00	2	7	77.78	2	22.22	9	.42
Question 19: Testimony was relied on heavily or considered with other research											
1. total of all with opinions on questions 19 and 18	14	87.50	2	12.50	16	6	40.00	9	60.00	15	.006
2. total of respondents who perceived public hearings were held frequently	13	92.86	1	7.14	14	5	41.67	7	58.33	12	.005
3. total of respondents who perceived public hearings were held too rarely	1	50.00	1	50.00	2	1	33.33	2	66.67	3	.72

Table 23

Comparison of Respondents Agreeing With the Majority of Their Colleagues on the Effectiveness of Their Commission Who Also Had Opinions on Queries (Questions 20 and 21)

20: the commission sought media coverage to some extent and
21: reaction of the media to the commission was favorable.

		Rosenberg Commission					Wessell Commission					
		Yes		No			Yes		No			
Questions		#	%	#	%	Total	#	%	#	%	Total	Significance
Question 20:	The commission sought media coverage to some extent											
	1. total of all with opinions on questions 20 and 21	8	80.00	2	20.00	10	6	46.15	7	53.85	13	.10
	2. total of respondents who perceived that media reaction was favorable	7	77.78	2	22.22	9	0	0	1	100.00	1	.11
	3. total of respondents who perceived that media reaction was unfaborable	1	100.00	0	0	1	6	50.00	6	50.00	12	.34
Question 21:	Reaction of the media to the commission was favorable											
	1. total of all with opinions on questions 21 and 20	9	90.00	1	10.00	10	1	7.69	12	92.31	13	.001
	2. total of respondents who perceived that the commission sought media coverage to some extent	7	87.50	1	12.50	8	0	0	6	100.00	6	.001
	3. total of respondents who perceived that the commission sought media coverage to a small extent, if at all	2	100.0	0	0	2	1	14.29	6	85.71	7	.02

Table 24

Comparison of Respondents Agreeing With the Majority of Their Colleagues on the Effectiveness of Their Commission Who Also Had Opinions on Queries (Questions 2A and 25)

2A: the objectives of the commission were clear and precise (vs. not sufficiently focused) and
25: many of the final recommendations of the commission addressed objectives outlined by the governor.

Questions	Rosenberg Commission					Wessell Commission					Significance
	Yes		No			Yes		No			
	#	%	#	%	Total	#	%	#	%	Total	
Question 2A: Objectives clear and precise											
1. total of all with opinions on questions 2A and 25	7	58.33	5	41.67	12	5	38.46	8	61.54	13	.43
2. total of respondents who perceived that final recommendations addressed governor's objectives	7	58.33	5	41.67	12	5	45.45	6	54.55	11	.54
3. total of respondents who perceived that governor's objectives were not addressed	0	-	0	-	0	0	0	2	100.00	2	NC*
Question 25: Many of the final recommendations addressed objectives outlined by the governor											
1. total of all with opinions on questions 2A and 25	12	100.00	0	0	12	11	84.62	2	15.38	13	.16
2. total of respondents who perceived that the objectives were clear and precise	7	100.00	0	0	7	5	100.00	0	0	5	1.00
3. total of respondents who perceived that the objectives were not sufficiently focused	5	100.00	0	0	5	6	75.00	2	25.00	8	.22

*NC = Not Computable

these tables are also comparing the interaction between pairs of questions as it relates to the perceived effectiveness of the commission.

The procedure used to discern the relationship between pairs of questions is to examine the proportions of positive responses, by commission, to one question among people responding positively to the other question and to compare those proportions with the equivalent proportion among those responding negatively to the other question.

Discussion of the pairs of questions.

Summary

Although there are occasions where the proportion of positive responses to a question were significantly different between commissions, there was no occasion where these proportions substantially changed when subsets of respondents, who answered another question in a specific way, were examined. Within each commission, the independence of responses to each of the pairs of questions were examined with Fisher's exact test. In no case was a significant (5 percent level) result found. However, certain patterns could be noted in the responses. These are described in the subsequent paragraphs.

An apparent difference can be noted between the effective (Rosenberg) Commission and the ineffective (Wessell) Commission on whether or not the political potency of the major affected interests was both considered in the selection of the commissioners, and, subsequently, during the implementation of the final recommendations.

The effective commission perceived that in both instances consideration had been given to the major affected interests. Whereas, it appears that the ineffective commission perceived that only during commissioner selection had this been the case.

The comparison between the effective and ineffective commissions of the amount of attention given by the commissioners to the activities of the commission and then, subsequently, to the implementation process is interesting. All of the effective commission and nearly all of the ineffective commission respondents indicated that their commissioners devoted at least a moderate amount of attention to the commissions' activities. Slightly more than half of the respondents from the effective commission indicated that the commissioners were also generally to very active in seeking implementation of the final recommendations. The ineffective commission, on the other hand, was more negative in their perceptions of the activity in seeking implementation.

A relationship can be noted between the questions concerning the basis for staff selection and the depth and breadth of the background research conducted by the staff. It would appear that those respondents who perceived that the staff was selected on the basis of merit alone also perceived that the depth and breadth of the background research conducted by the staff was moderate to great. Conversely, those respondents perceiving that the staff was not selected on the basis of merit were less positive about the depth and breadth of the background research of the staff.

When considering the relationship between perceptions of the basis of staff selection and the perceived skills of the staff, it can be noted that both sets of respondents generally considered the skills of their staffs to be good. It is interesting to note that the perception holds within the Wessell regardless of the perception of the basis of staff selection.

An interesting difference appears when the two commissions are compared on the responses to the frequency of public hearings and the use of testimony from public hearings. While both the effective and the ineffective commissions were both perceived as holding public hearings during the life of the commission at just about the right frequency, the effective commission was perceived to consider the testimony along with other research whereas the ineffective commission was perceived by many of its respondents to have used the testimony only when politically necessary or to have ignored it.

In comparing the reaction of the media to the respective commissions with the amount of media coverage sought, it can be observed that the media reaction was generally perceived by the Wessell respondents as unfavorable and that this perception held regardless of the perception of the degree that media coverage was sought. The respondents from the Rosenberg Commission tended to perceive that the media response was favorable and that it was sought by the commission.

Respondents from both commissions overwhelmingly reported that many of the final recommendations addressed the objectives outlined by the governor. This was true when those objectives were seen to be clear and precise and also when they were perceived as not sufficiently focused.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND NEED FOR FURTHER STUDY

Higher education, as one aspect of education, is a state responsibility. The states have been wrestling over the past several decades with the question of how to develop the optimum kind of structure by which the states can address the issues and concerns of higher education. Of the numerous structures that have been employed to approach the problem, one technique or mechanism has been the use of Blue-Ribbon commissions. Other stratagems include: consultants from inside the state, consultants from outside the state, legislative task forces, executive task forces, permanent statewide planning boards established either by statute or in some cases by state consitutions, to name a few.

In some states, Blue-Ribbon commissions have been considered effective in that they seem to have produced changes in higher education in the state. However, many reports by Blue-Ribbon commissions intended for use in planning, have ended up on a shelf unused. This study attempted to survey for the first time ever, Blue-Ribbon commissions in the nation, and to find out the extent to which selected persons in the state judge the use of Blue-Ribbon commissions as an effective vehicle for change in higher education in the state, and what characteristics of Blue-Ribbon commissions seem to be related to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the commission in terms of changes which can be attributed to the final commission reports. For purposes of this study, a Blue-Ribbon commission is defined as effective if it appears to have produced an immediate and recognizable change in the postsecondary structure, functions or processes in a state.

Out of forty-two respondent states plus the District of Columbia, only ten states reported no special study commissions had been established between 1965 and 1979. Several states since then, including Minnesota, Kentucky, Connecticut and North Dakota, have been either in the throes of a Blue-Ribbon commission study or in the planning stages for one. Due to this continued interest in special commissions as a planning vehicle it is of immediate utility to the states to have access to information which may help to insure the effectiveness of present and future commissions.

The process of determining effectiveness involved several approaches. One task was to compare the charges to the commission with the final recommendations of the commission. A second task was to compare the set of final recommendations with subsequent authorizing legislation. A third and especially significant task was to analyze or compare perceptions of effectiveness of Blue-Ribbon commissions by the use of questionnaire and semi-structured interviewing of selected persons, as appropriate, who were either involved on and with the commission and/or affected by the results emanating from the commission report. These individuals include State Higher Education Executive Officers, legislators, governors' staff, press, select institutional heads, legislative committee members and staff.

The process of identifying conditions for effectiveness took into consideration the context of fiscal/political conditions under which the commission was created and operated. The selection of two particular states, Maryland and New York, for in-depth analysis was made with the object in mind that a study aiming to examine elements contributing to effectiveness or ineffectiveness should look at states which have had contrasting outcomes of their Blue-Ribbon commissions. Reveiw of available data suggests that one of these states is considered to have had an effective commission, the other to have produced no effective results.

The first step in assessing the relationship between characteristics of a Blue-Ribbon commission and effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) in terms of observable change in higher education was to find out how the influential publics (including legislators, members of the executive branch, commission members, media, State Higher Education Executive Officers, campus officials) rate the work of the commissions under study, and how their perceptions vary or converge on specific facets of the commission's organization and work. The second step calls for identifying possible conditions for effectiveness for future consideration by states in setting up such special commissions.

Mention should be made of a possible halo effect inherent in this study. For example, it may be feasible to posit that because the Rosenberg Commission did produce change and therefore was effective, respondents answering questions after the fact may assume that all factors were positive.

Analysis of the data seems to suggest a number of conclusions grouped by topic areas. Topics whose characteristics were analyzed included: Commission; Commissioners; Staff; External Elements; Commission Output; Subsequent Effect. Each topic is related to a particular hypothesis.

Topic A: Commission

Hypothesis: The nature and characteristics of the commission approach to planning and problem solving would have an impact on effectiveness.

Even in the face of complexities facing both states in terms of the reasons for setting up some kind of study group to face new conditions as described above, it is apparent from responses received that the vehicle of a Blue-Ribbon commission is an acceptable form for such a study. The majority of respondents to both commissions favored this method to help the state make difficult, and for some affected parties, potentially unpopular decisions. Indeed, the utilization of a Blue-Ribbon commission to address the issues was perceived to be at least equally appropriate as the utilization of another type of agency or structure (such as a task force or legislative subcommittee study).

It would appear from respondent perceptions that the clarity and precision of the objectives of the commission does not appear to have an effect upon the outcomes of the commision's work. However, it does appear to be very important that the objectives be perceived to be attainable.

The factor of time or length of study is also indicated to be of great importance. As noted earlier, the Rosenberg Commission Study lasted for almost two and one half years while the Wessell Commission was given approximately nine months to complete its study. Both commissions were charged with broad and complex objectives. Responses indicated that there is a definite need to have a realistic, or sufficient, amount of time allotted for the commission to operate effectively.

The experience of some delay by the commission in getting organized, staffed and beginning operations was not perceived as a detrimental factor in its effectiveness. Neither was having sufficient funds to successfully accomplish the commission's objectives apparently perceived as a factor in insuring ultimate effectiveness.

Obviously, this does not imply that a dearth of funding will not have an impact on a commission. Rather, the availability of sufficient funds is not perceived as affecting the outcome.

Topic B: Commissioners

Hypothesis: The commissioners would have an impact on the effectiveness of a commission by way of their selection, suitability, accessibility, amount of attention to the activities of the commission, number of meetings and the leadership of the chairman.

If the selection of the commissioners takes into acocunt the major affected interests (e.g., sectors, university systems) this alone appears to have minimal relationship to the ultimate effectiveness of the commission. It is interesting to note that several respondents of the Rosenberg (effective) commission declared that the emphasis in commissioner selection had been on getting well-qualified "blue-ribbon" citizenry. It would appear that the broad spectrum then of interested persons for the most part outside of direct academic involvement was perceived as being perhaps somehow representative of, at least impartial towards, all sectors affected by the study.

Both respondent groups perceived that the commissioners were well suited to handle the issues although Rosenberg respondents held this view more strongly than did their Wessell counterparts. Likewise, both respondent groups perceived that there was at least a moderate amount of attention given to the commission's activities by the commissioners.

It does appear to be very important that the commissioners are perceived to meet enough number of times and, equally important, that they are perceived as being accessible to persons wishing to comment.

The quality of the leadership provided to the commission by its chairman was perceived by both respondent groups as good and, therefore, was not a factor in insuring effectiveness. It would, however, be unwise to assume that a poorly qualified chairman would make no difference.

Topic C: Staff

Hypothesis: The staff would have an impact on the effectiveness of a commission by way of their selection, number, skills, background, experience, accessibility, background research and ongoing research.

According to the final report, the Rosenberg Commission was aided by a staff of eight; the Wessell Commission by a staff of twelve (excluding secretarial assistance). Despite the larger number of staff assigned to the Wessell Commission, perceptions of respondents of this set varied radically from those of the Rosenberg Commission as to the sufficiency of the number of staff. Considered in conjunction with the variance in the amount of time allotted to each commission to complete its study one might be able to suggest that when the amount of time appears to be small in comparison to the charge then it would behoove a commission to amass a substantial number of qualified staff personnel.

It would appear that consideration should be given to the number of staff assigned to the commission to insure that it is sufficient to complete the assignment in the time allotted. It also appears to be preferable to select staff on the basis of merit alone rather than also considering political relationships in staff selection.

Both the effective and the ineffective commissions valued the skills, background and experience of the staff as well as their accessibility to persons wishing to comment. However, the depth and breadth of the background research conducted by the staff were seen as important factors to consider in setting up a commission. One might suggest further that intensive briefing on the issues under consideration and their history in the state might aid the staff in their work.

Respondents of both commissions valued the amount of relevant research (surveys, data gathering, etc.) conducted by the staff during the study. Both groups also perceived that the staff was accessible to persons wishing to comment.

Topic D: External Elements

Hypothesis: External elements including the number of public hearings, use of testimony, media coverage and reaction, use of outside experts, and involvement of the governor would have an impact on the effectiveness of a commission.

There was no real difference in opinion between commissions regarding the number of public hearings held; both felt there was a sufficient number. However, there was a dramatic difference about the utilization of testimony. Respondents of the effective commission reported that the testimony from public hearings was considered along with along research, whereas with regard to the ineffective commission, the majority of whose respondents reported that testimony was either ignored or considered only when politically necessary.

In terms of the media, the effective commission respondents indicated that media coverage had been sought and that the reaction in the media had been positive. The ineffective commission respondents, however, were split in their opinion as to the extent to which media coverage was sought but overwhelmingly reported that media reaction was unfavorable.

Successful commission respondents differed dramatically from their unsuccessful counterparts in reporting more frequently that experts (other than commission members and staff) had been used repeatedly.

Both commission respondent groups largely perceived the involvement of the governor in the work of the commission as being mild. However, judging by additional comments and interviews, the mild involvement was viewed in a positive light by the effective group and in a negative light by the ineffective group. Although for both commissions the governors' involvement was considered to be mild, the perception of why the respective governors established the respective commission differed. In the case of the successful commission, the motivation was construed as being to better an existing condition. By contrast, the motivation behind establishing the other commission was perceived as being to ameliorate a crisis.

Topic E: Commission Output

Hypothesis: The commission output would have an impact on the effectiveness of a commission, including such factors as the number of final recommendations which addressed the assigned objectives, the substantiation in the final report of the recommendations, the consideration given by the commission to the major affected interests (e.g., sectors) in its efforts towards implementation of the recommendations, the amount of activity of the commissioners in the implementation process and whether the final report led to changes in policies and procedures by other than legislators.

Both groups indicated that the final recommendations addressed the objectives outlined by the governor. However, only the effective group reported that the final report amply substantiated the recommendations.

The effective group also indicated more positively that the political potency of the major affected interests (e.g., sectors) was considered by the commission in its efforts towards implementation of the final recommendations.

It is important to note that the final report of the effective commission called for radical changes. However, subsequent to the issuing of this report, the governor appointed a task force composed of legislators and educators, a number of whom had served as commissioners, to work closely with the sectors, hold a few public hearings and develop pallatable and workable compromise objectives. In the words of one person who served on both the commission and the task force and is also a member of the House of Delegates in the state, the legislative task force "greased the skids" for passage of change-producing legislation.

On the basis of this, one might speculate about the merit in selecting commissioners who are removed one or more steps from the political and educational front line work within the state, since their solutions may be too idealistic and extreme. Conversely, one might speculate that such provocative recommendations may have sufficient shock value to cause entrenched interests to face change in a compromise situation.

One might suggest that in the face of the likely wholesale rejection of controversial recommendations of future commissions, that a subsidiary, short term, task force might be an effective strategy to mediate between the ideal and the real and thus arrive, at least to some degree, at change in a reasonable direction.

Further reactions concerning commission output suggest first, that at least some involvement on the part of the commissioners in seeking implementation of the final recommendations appears to be necessary for success. Secondly, the successful commission group report placed more reliance than did the unsuccessful group upon changes in policies and procedures to be implemented by individuals other than legislators.

Topic F: Subsequent Effect

Hypothesis: There would be a difference in responses between an effective and an ineffective commission on the following points: that subsequent change in postsecondary education was due to the work and recommendations of the commission; that similar changes would have come about without the commission; and that the influence of the commission on postsecondary education was constructive.

There were extreme differences in opinion between the two respondent groups concerning the degree to which subsequent change in postsecondary education resulted from the work and recommendations of the respective commissions, the successful commission group indicated there was some or great change, while the unsuccessful group indicated that there was minor or no change.

Both groups indicated that at least some similar changes would have come about even if the commission had not been called into being. However, it is interesting to note that the majority of the Rosenberg respondents indicated that only some of the changes would have come about, whereas the majority of the Wessell respondents appeared to feel that most or all of the changes would have occurred without that commission.

There was a divergence of opinion between the two sets of respondents regarding the influence of their respective commissions. The Rosenberg respondents tended to perceive that the influence of that commission was constructive, while the Wessell respondents tended to perceive that the influence of their commission was none.

Some Further Notes

On the basis of comparisons made between selected pairs of questions to ascertain if there was any relationship between them, some further conclusions were discernible.

Both the Rosenberg and Wessell respondent groups were divided in their perceptions of the clarity and precision of the objectives of their respective commissions. Regardless of this viewpoint, however, both groups of respondents did perceive that the final recommendations addressed the objectives outlined by the governor. There was no relationship between the clarity and precision of the original objectives on the one hand, and the outcome in terms of the final report's recommendations in addressing those objectives, on the other.

Both the Rosenberg and Wessell respondent groups agreed that major affected interests (e.g., sectors, university systems) had been taken into account in the selection of commissioners. However, the two respondent groups held divergent opinions on whether the political potency of the major affected interests was considered by the commission in its efforts towards implementation of the final recommendations. It appeared that besides a commission taking into account the affected interests in commissioner selection, these interests must also be given consideration during the implementation process, in order for the commission to be effective.

Both the effective and the ineffective respondent groups indicated that the commissioners gave at least moderate attention to the commission's activities but the Wessell group, unlike the Rosenberg group almost uniformly reported that the majority of commissioners were not active in seeking implementation of the final recommendations. It may possibly be surmised that the activity of the commissioners at the implementation stage contributes to the ultimate effectiveness of a commission.

Regardless of the basis (merit vs. politics) upon which staff was chosen (which differed dramatically between respondent groups) both groups indicated that the skills, background and experience of the staff were good. A somewhat different relationship exists between the basis for staff selection and the depth and breadth of the background research conducted by the staff. Apparently, those respondents perceiving that the staff was selected on the basis of merit alone also perceived that the depth and breadth of the background research conducted by the staff was at least moderate. On the other hand, those respondents perceiving that something other than merit was involved in staff selection were less positive about the depth and breadth of the background research of the staff. One might surmise that regardless of how the staff is selected a staff can still possess good skills, background and experience. However, this does not necessarily imply that the depth and breadth of such a staff's research is good and, therefore, attention should be paid by future commissions to ensuring that this facet of staff ability is given attention.

The frequency of public hearings was compared with the consideration given by the commission to testimony from the public hearings. Whereas both respondent groups were in agreement that public hearings were held frequently enough, the groups differed significantly in their opinions on the use of testimony. It may be possible to speculate that, despite the lack of a statistical connection between the two questions, the fact that the effective commission utilized testimony from public hearings indicates that it is of at least some importance to not only hold public hearings but to at least appear to utilize the testimony gained from them.

The final pair of questions compared concerned the media, comparing the extent to which the commission sought media coverage with the reaction in the media to the commission. Nearly all the Rosenberg respondents perceived that their commission sought media coverage and that the media reaction to the commission was favorable. On the other hand, less than half the Wessell respondents perceived that media coverage was sought. Additionally, nearly all felt that the media reaction was unfavorable (regardless of whether the coverage was sought or not). In other words, the negative media coverage of the unsuccessful commission might have been more the result of the nature of the report rather than the failure to pursue coverage.

Conclusion

In the Blue-Ribbon commission found to be effective, in terms of the definition of effectiveness, used in this investigation, the following factors were found that differentiated it from the less effective commission.

1. The objectives of the commission were perceived to a greater degree to have been attainable.

2. The commission was perceived to a greater degree to have had sufficient time in which to conduct the study.

3. The commissioners were perceived to a greater degree as having met together enough times.

4. The commissioners were perceived to a greater degree as having been accessible to persons wishing to comment.

5. The number of staff was perceived to a greater degree to have been sufficient to complete the assignment in the time allotted.

6. The basis upon which the staff was chosen was perceived to a greater degree to have been merit.

7. The depth and breadth of the background research conducted by the staff was perceived to a greater degree to have been at least moderate.

8. The testimony from public hearings was perceived to a greater degree as having been at least considered along with other research.

9. Reaction in the media to the commission was perceived to a greater degree to have been favorable.

10. Experts other than commission members and staff were perceived to a greater degree to have been used repeatedly.

11. The final report of the commission was perceived to a greater degree to have amply substantiated the recommendations.

12. The political potency of the major affected interests (e.g., sectors) was perceived to a greater degree to have been considered by the commission in its efforts towards implementation of the final recommendations.

13. The majority of the commissioners were perceived to a greater degree to have been at least generally active in seeking implementation of the final recommendations.

Possibilities and Needs for Further Study

The study has opened up possibilities and needs for further study as a result of at least two activities:

1. The definition, identification, and accumulation, for the first time of the bulk of state Blue-Ribbon commission studies in higher education undertaken in the United States.

2. The categorization and in-depth analysis of potentially significant factors affecting success of Blue-Ribbon commissions.

Some possibilities and needs for further study are as follows:

1. Utilize other Blue-Ribbon commission studies identified for the first time in the study, as a basis for examining further the criteria utilized in the current study and other studies in higher education planning and governance;

2. Investigate in depth the political relationships and process between a commission and the governor, the legislature, state officials for postsecondary education, institutional representatives and the press;

3. Investigate trends among Blue-Ribbon commissions' recommendations. For example, do the Blue-Ribbon commissions tend to favor the legislature?; coordinating/governing board?; persons who set it up?; postsecondary education?;

4. Seek, in depth, any procedural activities (e.g., involvement of legislators) that may precipitate effectiveness;

5. Investigate the conditions of the political environment (including the academic community in which a Blue-Ribbon commission

tends to operate and study the impact, if any, of diverse environments on the effectiveness of a commission;

6. Study relative effectiveness of studies resulting from questions such as: who chose them?; who administered them?;

7. Investigate significance, if any, of the following in having an effect on the success of studies: regional differences; size of state; nature of governance in the state (coordinating vs. governing boards); age of the statewide board; role of flag-ship university and of the independent institutions; and

8. Investigate the utility of subsequent task forces as a potential vehicle for acceptance of a Blue-Ribbon commission's recommendations.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF REQUEST TO STATE HIGHER EDUCATION EXECUTIVE OFFICERS FOR INFORMATION ON BLUE-RIBBON COMMISSIONS

Education Commission of the States
Central Office
1860 Lincoln Street
Denver, Colorado 80295
Phone (303) 830-3600

January 31, 1979

Dr. Kerry D. Romesburg
Executive Director
Commission on Postsecondary Education
Pouch F
State Office Building
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Dear Dr. Romesburg:

The purpose of this letter is to request your assistance in an important study.

As you may or may not know, I fulfill a dual function by holding an appointment as research assistant within the Postsecondary Education Department of the Education Commission of the States (ECS) and as a Ph.D. candidate in Higher Education Administration at the University of Denver.

We at ECS are attempting to develop a bibliography of reports of special or "Blue-Ribbon" Commissions on higher education issues established in the states since 1965. In addition, I am planning to write my dissertation on a few selected commissions and their impact.

I would appreciate it if you could send me a list of the names of any "Blue-Ribbon" Commission or Commissions which were authorized within your state since 1965. Ideally, the list would include the following: (a) names of Commission(s); (b) name of report(s); (c) date; (d) by whom appointed; (e) the purpose of the Commission(s) (if possible). The term "Blue-Ribbon Commission," as used here, is a Commission (a) with a predetermined life span; (b) that was established by the legislature and/or the executive branch of your state government; (c) to investigate and/or to recommend changes in postsecondary education structures, functions, origins or processes.

A further request: if the reports themselves are available, it would be extraordinarily helpful to acquire copies of the reports of these Commissions here at ECS. There is currently no one central location in the country for these reports. A library containing these reports would greatly facilitate the analysis and study of such commissions for purposes of evaluating their possible effectiveness. Information from such a library would be available to you and your colleagues.

A return envelope is enclosed for the listing. Many thanks in advance for your cooperation and interest. Should you wish, I will, of course, be happy to share results of the report with you as soon as it has been completed. Please note in your reply if you wish such a report.

Sincerely,

Janet Rogers Clarke
Inservice Education Program

JRC:mb

Enclosure

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE TO POTENTIAL ROSENBERG COMMISSION RESPONDENTS

PERCEPTION OF FACTORS AFFECTING THE RELATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEMPORARY "BLUE-RIBBON" STATE COMMISSIONS

Please indicate:

Your position at the time of the Rosenberg Commission:

____

____

Relationship if any to the commission (for example, member, staff, legislator):

____

____

Current Position:

____

____

Your particular answers will remain anonymous.

A. Where more than one answer is possible feel free to answer accordingly.

B. The space below each question or reverse side of page can be used for comments if you wish.

PLEASE RETURN BY FEBRUARY 15, 1980

Commission:

1. The utilization of a "Blue-Ribbon" Commission rather than another type of agency or structure (such as a task force or legislative subcommittee study) was

   a. more appropriate to address the issues__________________
   b. equally appropriate__________
   c. not as appropriate__________
   d. no opinion__________________

2. The objectives of the Commission were

   a. clear and precise__________
   b. not sufficiently focused_____
   c. seemed attainable__________
   d. seemed unattainable__________
   e. no opinion__________________

3. The length of time allotted for the Commission to complete its report was

   a. more than adequate__________
   b. adequate__________________
   c. less than adequate__________
   d. no opinion__________________

4. The delay experienced by the Commission in getting organized, staffed and beginning operations was

   a. great__________
   b. some__________
   c. little________
   d. none__________
   e. no opinion_____

5. Did the Commission have sufficient funds to successfully accomplish its objectives?

   a. yes__________
   b. no___________
   c. no opinion_____

Commissioners:

6. Did the selection of the Commissioners take into account the major affected interests? (e.g., sectors, university systems)

   a. yes____________

   b. no_____________

   c. no opinion_____

7. How suited were the Commissioners to handle the issues:

   a. well suited to perform their required function_____________

   b. poorly suited to perform their required functions____________

   c. no opinion____________________

8. The amount of attention to the commission's activities given by the Commissioners was

   a. great__________

   b. moderate_______

   c. small__________

   d. negligible ____

   e. no opinion_____

9. The number of times the Commissioners met was

   a. more than enough______________

   b. less than enough______________

   d. enough________________________

   e. no opinion____________________

10. How accessible were the Commissioners to persons wishing to comment?

   a. always_________

   b. often__________

   c. seldom_________

   d. never__________

   e. no opinion_____

11. The leadership provided to the Commission by its chairman was

    a. excellent______
    b. good___________
    c. fair___________
    d. poor___________
    e. no opinion_____

Staff

12. Was the number of staff assigned to the Commission sufficient to complete the assignment in the time allocated?

    a. yes____________
    b. no_____________
    c. no opinion_____

13. The staff was chosen on the basis of

    a. merit__________
    b. political relationship___
    c. both___________
    d. neither________
    e. other__________
    f. no opinion_____

14. The skills, background and experience of the staff were

    a. excellent______
    b. good___________
    c. fair___________
    d. poor___________
    e. no opinion_____

15. How accessible was the staff to persons wishing to comment?

    a. always________
    b. often_________
    c. seldom_________
    d. never__________
    e. no opinion_____

16. The depth and breadth of the background research conducted by the staff was

a. great___________
b. moderate_______
c. small__________
d. negligible_____
e. no opinion_____

17. For the duration of the study relevant research (surveys, data gathering, etc.) was conducted by the staff

a. as an ongoing process_________
b. intermittently________________
c. hardly at all_________________
d. other_____ ___________________
e. no opinion____________________

External Elements

18. During the life of the Commission, public hearings were held

a. too frequently________________
b. just about the right frequency____________________
c. too rarely____________________
d. no opinion____________________

19. Testimony from public hearings was

a. relied upon heavily___________
b. considered along with other research________________
c. considered only when politically necessary_______________
d. ignored_______________________
e. no opinion____________________

20. To what extent did the Commission seek media coverage?

a. great__________________________

b. some___________________________

c. small__________________________

d. none___________________________

e. no opinion_____________________

21. Reaction in the media to the Commission was

a. favorable______________________

b. unfavorable____________________

c. no opinion_____________________

22. Were experts other than Commission members and staff used repeatedly?

a. yes____________________________

b. no_____________________________

c. no opinion_____________________

23. The involvement of the governor in the work of the Commission was

a. avid___________________________

b. mild___________________________

c. nil____________________________

d. no opinion_____________________

24. What do you think were the Governor's reasons for establishing the Commission?

Commission Output:

25. How many of the final recommendations addressed the objectives outlined by the governor?

a. all____________
b. some____________
c. few____________
d. none____________
e. no opinion_____

26. The final report of the Commission amply substantiated the recommendations

a. yes____________
b. no_____________
c. no opinion_____

27. The political potency of the major affected interests (e.g., sectors) was considered by the Commission in its efforts towards implementation of the final recommendations

a. to a great extent_____________
b. somewhat______________________
c. hardly at all_________________
d. not at all____________________
e. no opinion____________________

28. How active were the majority of the Commissioners in seeking implementation of the final recommendations?

a. very__________________________
b. generally_____________________
c. minimally_____________________
d. negligibly____________________
e. no opinion____________________

29. The Commission report led to changes in policies and procedures by other than legislators

a. yes____________
b. no_____________
c. no opinion_____

Subsequent Effect:

30. To what degree was subsequent change in postsecondary education due to the work and recommendations of the Commission?

a. great__________
b. some___________
c. minor__________
d. none___________
e. no opinion_____

31. Similar changes would have come about even if the Commission had not been called into being

a. yes____________
b. some___________
c. no_____________
d. no opinion_____

32. The influence of the Commission on postsecondary education was

a. constructive________
b. destructive_________
c. none________________
d. no opinion__________

33. Under what conditions do you feel the Commission and its report could have been more effective?

34. Further Comments

APPENDIX C

COVER LETTER

Education Commission of the States
Central Office
1860 Lincoln Street
Denver, Colorado 80295
Phone (303) 830-3600

January 31, 1980

Senator James Clark, Jr.
State House
Annapolis, Maryland 21402

Dear Senator Clark:

The purpose of this letter is to request your assistance for a few minutes in an important study being conducted by Janet Rogers Clarke of ECS who, as a service to ECS and for her doctoral dissertation at the University of Denver, is studying "Blue-Ribbon" Commissions. The enclosed questionnaire seeks your opinion on factors which may have had bearing on the effectiveness of the Rosenberg Commission.

Responses received from key persons, such as yourself, should help others to discover what factors should be considered by governors, legislators, and other state policy makers when establishing "Blue-Ribbon" Commissions.

Your responses will be kept anonymous. Your identity is requested for statistical purposes only, and possibly follow-up by the author of the study.

Sincerely,

Richard M. Millard	Louis Rabineau
Director	Director
Postsecondary Education Department	Advanced Leadership Program

RMM:LR:mb

enclosures

APPENDIX D

RESPONSES BY COMMISSION TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

The following information is responses to the various open-ended questions and further comments supplied by the respondents. The responses are arranged first by commission, and second by type of respondent. To preserve confidentiality the respondents are identified by an arbitrary code number which appears to the left of each statement.

ROSENBERG COMMISSION

Chairman and Commissioners

What do you think were the governor's reasons for establishing the Commission?

A1 It was an ongoing process of reorganizing the structure of state government. The last item on the list.

A2 Dissatisfaction by citizens with abilities of graduates--secondary, junior college, senior college.

Increasing costs resulting in need to revamp or restructure to realize economies.

To indicate to critics, both professional and lay, that an effort was underway.

A3 To complete the reorganization of the state's executive branch which began in 1969.

A4 To make a statewide study of education which was long overdue.

A5 It was the "in" thing among governments at all levels, in Maryland and across the nation. The pressure for accountability was becoming a force that could no longer be ignored, tax vigilantes were increasingly vocal, bond issues were encountering difficulties, and, in general, the public's love affair with its schools was coming to a noisy and sometimes ugly end.

A6 To examine the effectiveness of the tripartite system in Maryland as it ended its first decade, with specific attention given to his perception, correctly, that state-level coordination was extremely weak and counter-productive. Secondly, to remove "heat" from him on criticisms of "the chaos in higher education."

A7 Need for such a Commission had been apparent to both Governor and Legislature for some years, particularly the need for coordination in higher education.

A8 As stated in establishing Commission.

Under what conditions do you feel the Commission and its report could have been more effective?

A1 With complete support of governor and with legislators looking at recommendations objectively. (Utopia.)

A2 Somehow the legislature was not convincingly sold on the report; hence, the Governor would implement those parts only that he felt the legislature would accept. Those persons, office-holders, critics who did not "buy" the report, immediately went to key legislators to repel any changes.

A3 No response.

A4 No opinion.

A5 Questions 30-32 reflect the critical flow in the work of the Commission: its preoccupation with postsecondary education at the expense of elementary and secondary education where the major problems in Maryland's education system then and still are.

A6 Probably a bit more creditable if it would not have included the K-12 system in its state-level structure recommendations.

A7 If the Chairman had greater understanding of the issues and problems of higher education and had possessed greater leadership characteristics.

A8 The legislative executive Task Force and the commitment of the Governor, building on the work of the Commission, made possible the enactment of legislation which made some significant changes. Although the task force differed with the Commission in some respects the work of the Commission, and the participation of the legislators on the Commission, and the expectation of the public that some changes would occur, made it possible to reach conclusions in the task force. With the commitment of the Governor and the support for the work of the task force, there was smooth sailing through the legislature in one session.

Further Comments

A1 It was a good exercise. Initially the Commission stumbled on clearly grasping their mission. Then progress was slow due to distrust among members. Black vs. white, county vs. city, etc. Gradually they learned to trust one another and came up with a set of recommendations that were advantageous to state and education. Twenty-three out of 26 members endorsed all recommendations.

The Governor was afraid of the political implications of some of the recommendations and had his staff water some down before presenting to legislature--who passed his bills.

The new structure is good. Weaker than our Commission thought it ought to be--and still feeling its way, so not even as strong as it could be. It has, at least, once and for all established a permanent hearing vehicle in the internecine fights and as time goes along will feel and use its own strength. The recommendations passed over by the Governor's staff will reappear and gradually get adopted by the legislature.

A2 No response

A3 Because certain sectors objected to certain recommendations, the Governor appointed a task force to "evaluate" the Commission recommendations. Most of the task force recommendations were enacted into law.

Frankly, the task force was created because the Governor believed that most of the Commission's recommendations would not "fly."

A4 A study should be reordered every 5-6 years to assure progress toward goals and to provide opportunity for a more continuing assessment . . .

A5 The lone monument to the Rosenberg Commission is our strong new State Board for Higher Education and the constructive potential it represents. That probably is enough and certainly is more than most study groups can point to. Though I may have hoped for more, and even felt, from time to time, that more was possible, I am experienced enough to know that great progress comes not often from singular successes, but from the methodical consolidation of small gains.

Looking back, if I have a single criticism of the Commission it is my answer to your question #2: The objectives were not sufficiently--or realistically--focused. The charge was so completely broad as to guarantee a schedule of work that could not be adequately organized, and a result so far reaching as to be unattainable in its entirety.

A lesser complaint was the presence on the Commission of legislators who would later have to act on the recommendations. While their contributions were enlightened and significant they always were "conditioned" by colleague consciousness which often engenders the kind of "real world" thinking that limits creativity and causes Commissions like this one to publish pedestrian reports as this one did.

A6 The survey is well-structured and in almost all instances asks the right questions. I would strongly suggest that Dick Millard have a staff member review my responses through an analysis of the Record, our monthly newsletter, which I hope comes to you. This analysis should be interesting, because it will show sequentially the struggle still going on in Maryland toward effective state-level coordination.

A7 I believe that such a Commission needs a strong executive director and ample funds for strong staff to insure the carrying out of its mission. But that "strong executive director" must be careful to recognize the ego needs of the Commission so that this effectiveness is not negated.

A8 No comment

- - - - -

Executive Director and Staff

What do you think were the governor's reasons for establishing the Commission?

A1 The governor felt a certain frustration about the fiscal demand education was placing on the state. He also had the feeling that responsibility was so decentralized at the state level that no single authority was in charge.

B2 To legitimize the governor's desire to appoint a secretary of education, a new post in the cabinet. When this became politically unfeasible, the focus switched to structure and governance of education. There was also a general feeling outside the education establishment that higher education had grown haphazardly and a stronger statewide agency would be beneficial.

Under what conditions do you feel the commission and its report could have been more effective?

B1 The governor fell into political and judicial disrepute during the course of the commission's work. It is alleged by some that these circumstances adversely impacted the commission.

B2 The size of the commission presented problems in selecting appropriate meeting times and reaching consensus. More involvement of the governor also might have prevented the need for the second task force. If the commission's "effectiveness" is measured by the number of recommendations.

Further Comments

B1 No response

B2 The Rosenberg Commission did much of the groundwork for the Wilner Task Force which evaluated the Commission's recommendation. The lack of involvement of the governor and the latitude given the Commission must be considered in light of this second task force. The task force lacked the broad representation of the Commission and the ability to look beyond political expediency.

The governor's input at the second stage of the process was considerable. The task force was hand picked, and its chairman was definitely the governor's man. At one point over a hotly debated issue, a commissioner (who would later serve on the task force) told the group go ahead and make the decision because it would not stand in the end.

The final test of the impact of the Rosenberg Commission, however, is not the action by the second task force if history runs true to course. Major changes that are traced back to earlier commissions often occurred long after the recommendations were made. The ideas, however, were sown, later to grow into new programs and systems. Perhaps the primary benefit of study commissions is the injection of innovation into established organizations.

- - - - -

Legislators and Legislative Staff

What do you think were the governor's reasons for establishing the commission?

C1 Need for focused look at total education organization.

C2 To get a handle on higher education.

C3 Need to have a more effective control body for higher education. The coordinating council had no powers and no input to HE policies or budget.

Under what conditions do you feel the Commission and its report could have been more effective?

C1 Only without political constituencies of the institutions.

C2 No response

C3 Hard to say

Further Comments

C1 No response

C2 No response

C3 None

- - - - -

SHEEO and Staff and Board Members to whom they report

What do you think were the Governor's reasons for establishing the Commission?

D1 To straighten out a "messy" organizational situation.

D2 Internal conflicts and feuding in higher education in Maryland.

D3 Review structure of Higher Education--to make it more effective and responsive.

D4 To abolish the Maryland Council; to appoint new members

Under what conditions do you feel the Commission and its report could have been more effective?

D1 It would have been more effective if it had dealt with the real problems and not the political problems.

D2 No comment

D3 No opinion

D4 If it had not been the tool of Gov. Mandel and his staff.

Further Comments

D1 No Comment

D2 No Comment

D3 No Comment

D4 None

- - - - -

Media

What do you think were the governor's reasons for establishing the commission?

E1 Political pressures to address higher education duplication and overbuilding as well as increasing demands of public schools on state budget.

Under what conditions do you feel the commission and its report could have been more effective?

E1
1. Commission took on too much from the outset, with its "cradle-to-grave" charge.
2. Despite the presence of legislators on commission, its final recommendations were simply too politically risky. There should have been a way to keep governor and key legislative leaders informed of the commission's line of thinking as it was going along.
3. But despite overblown recommendations for changes in governance, the commission pulled punches on even more sensitive issues such as what to do with the mess in Baltimore metropolitan area. I still think a "blue-ribbon" group which includes legislators is the way to go, but this one didn't go far.
4. Bringing in an out-of-state education bureaucrat to serve as executive director was a fine idea from the standpoint of his neutrality, but an instate person might have had a better idea of political reality in Maryland.

Further Comments

E1 No response

- - - - -

Governor's Office Staff

What do you think were the governor's reasons for establishing the commission?

F1 Education was the only major component of state government not addressed during the executive reorganization process.

F2 To create an education organization(s) sensitive to the needs of all citizens.

Under what conditions do you feel the commission and its report could have been more effective?

F1 No response

F2 The commission failed to create a staff to get facts and answers for itself. It merely listened to testimony from education special interest groups (mostly educators and politicians) and arrived at conclusions based on the various components of biased and self-serving testimonies.

Further Comments

F1 No response

F2 No response

- - - - -

Other

What do you think were the governor's reasons for establishing the commission?

G1 No response

G2 To improve accordination and management in higher education. To study conditions which had resulted in criticisms of disorganization, duplication, and inefficiencies in higher education.

Under what conditions do you feel the commission and its report could have been more effective?

G1 After the final draft had been prepared the commission or its executive director should have met with representatives of the governor's office, the legislative fiscal committees, the department of budget and fiscal planning and the department of state planning to review the recommendations and assess their political and organizational viability. Failure to make this crucial step led the commission to recommend policies that were impossible to implement, thereby substantially diminishing the effectiveness of the commission's work.

G2 No comment

Further Comments

G1 No response

G2 No response

- - - - -

University Sector Representatives

What do you think were the Governor's reasons for establishing the Commission?

H1 No opinion

Under what conditions do you feel the Commission and its report could have been more effective?

H1 No comment

Further Comments

H1 None

WESSELL COMMISSION

Chairman and Commissioners

What do you think were the Governor's reasons for establishing the Commission?

Ia Commission was established by legislative mandate. The objectives of the Commission were clear and precise but not necessarily in writing--"understood" instead; such as developing an effective yet face-saving resolution of the impasse between the City and the State over funding the City University.

Ib (1) It seemed like a good idea at the time. (2) Instead of tying up the loose ends of the CUNY legislation in 1976, a greater period of time was needed. (3) The private college sector needed a funnel to air their concerns. (4) The popularity and effectiveness of the Board of Regents was very low at the time and a fresh review of the higher education scene was needed. (5) Warren Anderson was willing to go along with the idea. (6) Better to build a lightning rod outside the house.

Under what conditions do you feel the Commission and its report could have been more effective?

Ia If it had been given more time and if the reason for its being called into being had been more than political, that is, to resolve in the first instance an impasse between the City and the State. The impasse was resolved behind the scenes by the Commission for which result it got no (and sought no) public credit. Its other recommendations received less attention and serious consideration.

Ib (1) Less inerference from certain executive officials.
(2) Retention of first choice for executive director.

Further Comments

Ia This questionnaire should have been pretested. It could be improved in many ways. A professional questionnaire writer should have been involved.

Ib No response

Executive Director and Staff

What do you think were the Governor's reasons for establishing the Commission?

IIa It was a critical period for higher education in New York and he needed advice, at least if it was the sort of advice he wanted. It did not turn out to be that kind.

IIb Problems seemed financially and politically unresolvable through legislature and administrative processes.

IIc The fiscal crisis in CUNY and its two week closing.

IId Deflect the heat of the CUNY crisis.

Under what conditions do you feel the Commission and its report could have been more effective?

IIa None, really. The report was looked at and then ignored. Although higher education was in trouble, neither the Governor nor the legislature seemed in a mood to do anything about it. I'm not sure what could have made the report more effective, given the politics of the situation. In any case, the report was not embraced by any important sector, and thus went nowhere. My guess is this would have happened no matter what the recommendations.

IIb Needed greater support from the Governor throughout the deliberations of the Commission and especially in implementation. Commissioner involvement in implementation would have helped!

IIc The task of reorganizing SUNY-CUNY was not possible using this method.

IId
1. More active push by commissioners.
2. More activity by governor.

Further Comments

IIa The Commission came to conclusions it thought valid, but did not bring any groups along with it. So the conclusions fell with a dull thud. But, looking back, I now believe that any set of recommendations would have been opposed by most powerful groups in education, and would therefore have had little influence, unless the recommendations were completely bland. The Governor, who could have been a key, seemed almost completely indifferent. The commissioners, after submitting the report, did almost nothing to urge its implementation--three of five were from out of state--and they saw their obligation as preparing a report, not lobbying for its acceptance.

IIb No response

IIc No response

IId I'd like to receive copy of the final report.

- - - - -

Legislators and Legislative Staff

What do you think were the Governor's reasons for establishing the Commission?

IIIa Response to Legislative concern about the future of higher education in New York State.

IIIb Senate insistence; part of the June 1976 bailout deal for CUNY

IIIc Desire to have outside involvement

Under what conditions do you feel the Commission and its report could have been more effective?

IIIa More Legislative cooperation sought.

IIIb The Commission had three unsolvable problems:
1. It was created as a political bastard
2. Not enough time
3. Misdirected substantive recommendations
"It did not have enough time or support and thus did wrong job few wanted in the first place."

IIIc No response

Further Comments

IIIa None

IIIb To repeat, Commission, created as a political bastard, did not have enough time and direction; as a result it did a poor substantive job much to no one's surprise and certainly to no one's chagrin. But for a miracle, the Commission was doomed to disaster from the beginning.

Politically

1. Commission created as "a deal" part of the 76 CUNY bailout
2. Governor dragged feet on appointments
3. Commission never had a strong benefactor
4. Sectors all suspicious
5. Regents incensed
6. Division of the Budget amused

Time

1. Created in June 76
2. Commissioners appointed in September 76
3. Report was due March 77
4. Six working months not enough

Substance

1. Rather than try to make peace or even take on the major institutional and sector interests, the Commission copped out.
2. CUNY be saved; nice idea finally done three years later. Commission provided very little justification and never addressed the "parity" issue head on.
3. Restructuring the public sector was a "California cop out." Commission so overwhelmed they went to an academic exercise.
4. Independent sector neglected.
5. Regents oversight a good idea but made everyone else mad.

IIIc No response

- - - - -

SHEEO Office Staff

What do you think were the Governor's reasons for establishing the Commission?

IVa 1. Transfer professional education in licensure from Regents.
2. Restructure SUNY and CUNY and replace their boards.
3. Weaken power of Regents.

IVb Unknown

IVc To solve a politically sensitive problem or at least to stall having to face it.

IVd Political.

IVe To investigate the historic question "Should we remove governance of Higher Education from the Board of Regents?" Many governors searched his question in past years.

Under what conditions do you feel the Commission and its report could have been more effective?

IVa More sensible understanding of issues and proposals that were apolitical and asserted to higher education needs. Commission failed to recognize growing need for coordination. Proposed overblown bureaucracy.

IVb No response

IVc I doubt such conditions existed.

IVd More objective members.

IVe Better research on the development of Master Planning in N.Y.S. with consideration of the following: Role of State Agency (minimally regulatory); Role of institutions' faculty and trustees on implementation of an amendment to mission statements.

Further Comments

IVa No response

IVb The Wessell Commission was a waste of time and money.

IVc No response

IVd No response

IVe The chairman of the Commission did not investigate completely the background of the members of the Board of Regents. A majority of the members had extensive experience in trusteeships of all kinds, including institutions of higher education.

- - - - -

Media

What do you think were the Governor's reasons for establishing the Commission?

Va Get the heat off himself.

Under what conditions do you feel the Commission and its report could have been more effective?

Va Better leadership and a more realistic sense of the needs and balance of power in higher education in N.Y. The recommendations were hastily drawn up, intellectually weak and never had anything to do with the real world. They were doomed to collect dust on the shelf from the moment they came out of the mimeograph machine.

Further Comments

Va No response

- - - - -

Other

What do you think were the Governor's reasons for establishing the Commission?

VIIa

VIIb Not sure.

VIIc No response

VIId

VIIe I think he really wanted some advice on the direction higher education should take in New York but he, as in many other instances, did not seek out broad assistance and advice--certainly he ignored the role of the independent sector. There was much rumor as to what he wanted.

VIIf --Buy time
--Put issue off

Under what conditions do you feel the Commission and its report could have been more effective?

VIIa

VIIb It was politically naive, making proposals with no chance of approval. Perhaps if it had done its political homework or tempered its suggestions with realism it might have had an impact.

VIIc No response

VIId

VIIe Make more effective and realistic recommendations.
Consider all of higher education.

VIIf --If Commission and staff had genuinely worked with legislature and affected institutions and their leaders and Deputy Commissioner for Higher Education in the State Department.
--If Commissioners had taken aggressive and public posture and lobbied long and hard to convince public of ideas.
--If Commissioners had consensus, common set of convictions substantiated policies to begin with.

- - - - -

Other

Further Comments

VIIa

VIIb No response

VIIc No response

VIId

VIIe No response

VIIf No response

- - - - -

Consultants to the Commission

What do you think were the Governor's reasons for establishing the Commission?

VIIIa Unknown

Under what conditions do you feel the Commission and its report could have been more effective?

VIIIa Commission could have given serious consideration and reported on the work, findings and recommendations of the research staff and their consultants.

Further Comments

VIIIa No response

- - - - -

University Sector Representatives

What do you think were the Governor's reasons for establishing the Commission?

IXa
1. Genuine desire to cope with future of higher education in atmosphere of declining resources.
2. Buy time and rely on less partial sources for recommendations.
3. Major need to focus on city university.

IXb First to rationalize the funding of the City University. Some staff around the governor saw the Commission as a vehicle for restructuring public higher education in warp more to their taste than the existing "two system" approach.

IXc To try to handle the emerging problems relating to the City University of New York, relations with SUNY and private higher education, and the planning role of the Board of Regents.

IXd New York State's fiscal problems and, more specifically, the City University of New York's fiscal crisis.

IXe Funding sources--state vs. local--for the City University of New York. Other reasons, however, were given such as the "financial problems at CUNY and at SUNY," governance at CUNY; role of independent sector; funding community colleges; role of Board of Regents.

IXf Given the first veto over-ride in NYS in 104 years in early April, 1976; given the total collapse of the City University; given the massive fiscal problems in the City; and given the growing financial problems on a statewide basis, Carey's ability to govern, if you will, was beginning to be called in serious question. So, in higher education this Commission enabled the Governor to buy himself precious months during which the problems either would erode in importance or be solved in New York's typical band-aid fashion by others. This is precisely what happened.

IXg ? overly drawn in any case for such large scale issues.

IXh Biding time, given CUNY crisis and inevitability of takeover of CUNY funding.

Under what conditions do you feel the Commission and its report could have been more effective?

IXa --Longer lead time had been provided
--Chief staff official had more familiarity with New York State
--If Commission hadn't been "haunted" by the CUNY solvency situation
--If greater weight and attention paid to legislative climate and vested interests of higher education
--Greater sensitivity to the history of New York state higher education.

IXb Had it been more attuned to the realities of the State and City and less a merely conceptual exercise in how institutions might be grouped. Its recommendations would have been different and its effect greater.

IXc a. More time to study issues
b. More care in analyzing issues
c. More follow through in aiding implementation.
It was a "quick and dirty" study and had little effect.

IXd While the Commissioners were apparently able to apply their knowledge of private higher education to New York State, most seemed either unwilling or unable to understand the history and politics of public higher education in New York and, consequently, recommended an unrealistic proposal which would have dismantled the two major systems of public higher education restructuring them in a more fragmented and complex way with apparently little likelihood of cost savings.

IXe By providing informed assessments--or estimates--of the extent to which each sector could be expected to shrink in size during the 1980s and design or suggest policies appropriate to each sector. No rationale--or recognition--for the public sector provided.

IXf First, the Governor should have sought agreement among the "big three"--himself, Senator Majority Leader and Aseembly Speaker--as to the nature and extent of the problem. Second, the Commission should have been a two-part effort, first to test the waters for CUNY and then to set forth a vision for higher education in the state. Third, a small group of commissioners as well as staff should have taken on CUNY, which in fact Wessel did. Fourth, a much broader group, CHOSEN VERY CAREFULLY and of the C. Kerr quality, should have functioned for about two years on the much more difficult, second issue. Last and of critical importance, the Commission should have worked on its own pieces of legislation with a bill drafting capacity, but also with a capacity for packaging bills in politically marketable units. See Jim Ruhl on this.

IXg More time, visibility and background thinking about issues nearly 200 years old in New York State.

IXh The Wessell Commission was ineffective mainly because the Governor really used the Commission as a device to gain time and did not move to carry out many of the key recommendations. If the Governor had been prepared to act, the Wessell Commission gave him some important recommendations on funding and other issues, and higher education in New York would have been improved.

Under Governor Rockefeller, the Heald Commission of 1959, then the Mair Commission of 1964, and then the Bundy Commission of about 1968, all made recommendations that became State policy and improved higher education in New York State greatly.

But Governor Carey appears to use funding for higher education as a political tool, as demonstrated by last year's decision to fund the construction of York College, but to cut back on the commitments to the major centers of SUNY. He is squandering resources for higher education rather than focusing them for best effect, as Rockefeller would have done. Carey is not using experts like the Wessell Commission, except as covers for politically inspired decisions. In the long run the decisions are not even good politics, for most observers in higher education recognize that his policies are short-sighted and, in fact, so increasingly do many members of the general public.

In brief, a Commission is likely to be productive if and only if the appointing authority is ready to take the Commission's recommendations seriously and to act on them appropriately.

Further Comments

IXa The Commission was a complete failure and only increased tensions in higher education.

IXb No response

IXc The staff ended up writing huge sections of the report.

IXd While the Commissioners were apparently able to apply their knowledge of private higher education to New York state, most seemed either unwilling or unable to understand the history and politics of public higher education in New York and, consequently, recommended an unrealistic proposal which would have dismantled the two major systems of public higher education restructuring them in a more fragmented and complex way with apparently little likelihood of cost savings.

IXe I believe the staff reflected the staff director's view that the distinction between public and private higher education was small or marginal. The report failed to acknowledge the role of public higher education in providing educational opportunities to those who would otherwise be deprived.

A better informed report would have attempted to set forth--somewhat in the manner of the recent Carnegie report on *3000 Futures*--some policy guidelines for individual and systemwide planning. Further, the report should have been more precise in use of terms such as "university"--a word subject to various meanings.

IXf None

IXg My long friendly acquaintance with Nils Wessell doesn't inhibit my view that he weakened his case by presenting changes of such basic moment to those concerned and with such light consideration of the consequences upon those whose universities would be affected that the end result could not have been taken to heart in this state. The historic battles of upstate New York and New York City alone could be relied on to come to life and kill the proposals for wholesale scrambling of constituencies. Social movements simply don't come about in this fashion.

IXh No response

APPENDIX E

NOTES ON METHODOLOGY

Notes on Methodology
(Reference: pp. 44, 48, 49 of Text)

The following paragraphs describe in more detail the steps by which the sample of two Blue-Ribbon commissions was determined and the questionnaire, upon which the analysis was based, was developed. Additional information is provided on the number and type of persons to whom the questionnaire was sent and also on the number and type of respondents.

A. Selection of the Wessell and Rosenberg Commissions as representatives of Blue-Ribbon commissions for purposes of this study

Specific information concerning the number and type of Blue-Ribbon commissions utilized by states in the recent past was relatively scarce. Therefore, in order to determine the particular commissions to be studied, a survey was undertaken of each of the fifty (50) states regarding the appointment and use of such commissions. Arbitrarily, it was determined that the survey would cover commissions convened between 1965 and 1979; any study, such as this one, that sought responses from participants and others directly involved in the commissions would have difficulty in securing such information going back more than fifteen years.

The recipient in each state of this request for data on Blue-Ribbon commissions was the State Higher Education Executive Officer. Forty-two out of fifty states and the District of Columbia responded to this request for information. From these responses, which, to the knowledge of the researcher, provided the first up-to-date survey of

Blue-Ribbon commissions, it was found that twenty-two (22) states had made use of one or more Blue-Ribbon commissions between 1965 and 1979.

In order to achieve the purpose of the study which was to discover, if possible, elements contributing to the effectiveness (and, conversely, the ineffectiveness) of such commissions, it was necessary to determine which of the 22 states would provide sufficient data for an in-depth study of their commissions. It was decided that one way to accomplish this objective was to compare two commissions, one considered "effective" and the other considered "ineffective" by knowledgeable persons in the field. However, a general opinion of effectiveness and ineffectiveness in itself would not be a sufficient base for selecting the two commissions for detailed study; it would be necessary that one could focus on the elements contributing to effectiveness and ineffectiveness and, insofar as possible, keep other factors more or less constant. Obviously, a study of this sort cannot control all factors and cannot reproduce conditions appropriate to a controlled experiment; complex structures are involved, and the investigation had to be conducted after the fact. In gross terms, however, "effectiveness" and "ineffectiveness" constituted the dependent variables, and the factors contributing to these results constituted the independent variables.

In reviewing the 22 states with Blue-Ribbon commissions and searching for two commissions suitable for in-depth study, the following general conditions emerged as significant "control" factors:

a) One commission had to be identifiable as "effective" and the other as "ineffective" from the perspective of persons involved in the commissions and in the view of knowledgeable persons in the field.

b) It should be possible to locate the persons involved with and/or knowledgeable about the respective commissions.

c) Sufficient information concerning the organization, work and outcomes of the commission had to be available.

d) The time at which the commissions undertook their work had to be reasonably close together.

e) Both commissions ought to be called into existence by the same agency, either the legislature or the governor.

f) Both commissions had to begin with a similar broad charge.

g) Both commissions had to be within states in the same general geographical area of the country.

h) The states in which the commissions operated had to have a similar history of experience with Blue-Ribbon commissions.

i) There had to be general consensus among knowledgeable and scholarly persons that the two commissions indeed represented models of "ineffective" and "effective" commissions.

Several states and their commissions appeared to fit many of these conditions, however, further review determined that the Wessel and Rosenberg Commissions (New York and Maryland, respectively) fulfilled the conditions. The proposal to investigate these two commissions was discussed and tested with Dr. Richard M. Millard, former Director, Department of Postsecondary Education of the Education Commission of the States (ECS); Dr. Warren Hill, former Executive Director, ECS; and Dr. Louis Rabineau, Director of the Inservice Education Program, ECS. They agreed that the two commissions would provide a reasonable sample and that they met the conditions that had been considered important.

B. Development of the Questionnaire

In order to solicit in a systematic way the opinion of persons involved in and associated with the work of the commissions, a questionnaire consisting of thirty-four (34) items was developed.

The initial list of items was developed on the basis of a review of the literature. Since the literature discussing the Blue-Ribbon commissions was quite limited, and the survey conducted in preparation for this study constituted one of the more systematic reviews, the opinion of a considerable body of knowledgeable people in institutions and centers for the study of higher education, the commissions, the state legislature, state agencies and foundations was sought regarding factors that might be related to effectiveness and ineffectiveness in such commissions. Many of these persons were of tremendous assistance throughout the study. The persons contacted included, but were not limited to, the following:

•Jay Hershenson, Wessell Commissioner

•Delegate Lucille Maurer, Rosenberg Commissioner and Member, Maryland House of Delegates

- Amy Plumer, author, Wessell commission Final Report and Deputy Director for Policy Analysis, State of New York Special Task Force on Equity and Excellence in Education
- James Ruhl, Program Associate to the Senate Majority Leader, New York State
- Sheldon Knorr, State Higher Education Executive Officer, Maryland
- Edward Hines, Professor, State University of New York (SUNY), Albany and author of a policy paper on the Wessell Commission for the Study of Higher Education (AAHE), 1978 titled Anatomy of a Blue-Ribbon Commission: The Case of New York State
- Frederick Crossland, Program Officer, Ford Foundation
- Theodore Kauss, President, Frost Foundation
- Ted Hollander, State Higher Education Executive Officer, New Jersey
- E. T. Dunlap, State Higher Education Executive Officer, Oklahoma
- Robert Berdahl, Professor of Higher Education, State University of New York (SUNY), Buffalo
- Frank Keppel, Visiting Scholar, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts

During the discussions with these people, it became obvious that the items fell under six natural groupings: commission, commissioners, staff, external elements, commission output and subsequent effect.

While the final version of the questionnaire was not submitted to a panel of experts, nor was a pilot test undertaken, it appeared to the researcher that in the light of the considerable input from persons named above, informal as it was, the conditions of review and testing required under conventional procedures had indeed been met. The final version of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

C. The Returns

A total of 119 questionnaires was sent, and fifty-one returned, just under 43 percent returned. This return was realized on the basis of the original mailing and a second request. While the return was not as high as had been hoped, an analysis of the persons who actually responded suggested that considerable confidence could be placed in the responses. The distribution of responses is presented in Table E-1.

The confidentiality of the responses was assured when potential respondents were contacted. For purposes of indicating the caliber and type of respondents, the following generalizations are provided:

a) Four legislators (1 chairman, Senate Finance Committee; 1 Assemblyman; 1 Senator; 1 Delegate)

b) Two legislative staff (1 Principal Analyst, Legislative Budget Review; 1 Program Associate, Senator Majority Leader)

c) Two media (1 Education Editor, The New York Times; 1 Editorial Writer, The Evening Sun, Baltimore)

Table E-1

Number of Individuals Contacted and Number of Respondents to the Survey Questionnaire by Commission and Group

Group	Wessell		Rosenberg	
	Contacted	Responded	Contacted	Responded
Commissioners	5	2 (including chairman)	27	8 (including chairman)
Staff	6	6 (including executive director)	4	2 (including executive director)
Legislators and Legislative Staff	5	3	9	3
Statewide Board Members and SHEEO	17	5	11	4
Media	1	1	1	1
Governor's Office	2	0	4	4
University Sector	12	8	8	1
Other (includes Foundation Executives, Higher Education Scholars, Consultants)	4	3	3	0
Total	52	28	67	23

d) Four Governor's Office Staff (1 Special Assistant to the Governor's Office; 1 Senior Budget Analyst; 1 Capital Budget Analyst; 1 Executive Aide for Education)

e) Nine University sector (3 University Presidents; 2 Deputy Chancellors; 1 Chancellor, City-wide system; 2 Professors of Higher Education; 1 President, Association of Independent Colleges and Universities)

f) Two Foundation Officers (1 Vice President for Education and Public Policy, Ford Foundation; 1 Program Officer, Ford Foundation)

g) One Consultant (Professor of Economics)

[The above list does not include the Commissioners and Commission Staff.]

One final note: In the course of the surveys a great deal of information regarding the political climate within the states was collected. Since, however, it was not possible to make direct connections between this general information and the assessment of the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of the commissions, this information was not included as part of the study. It is, however, the kind of information that should be examined in any further study of Blue-Ribbon commissions.

PERCEPTIONS OF FACTORS AFFECTING THE RELATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEMPORARY BLUE-RIBBON STATE COMMISSIONS

An Abstract of a Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Janet Rogers Clarke Johnson
June 1982

ABSTRACT

Blue-Ribbon commissions are one mechanism states use to address issues in higher education. In some states, Blue-Ribbon commissions have been considered effective in that they seem to have produced changes in higher education in the state. However, many reports by Blue-Ribbon commissions intended for use in planning, have ended up on a shelf unused. This study attempted to survey, for the first time ever, Blue-Ribbon commissions in the nation between 1965 and 1979 and to find out what characteristics of Blue-Ribbon commissions seem to be related to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the commission in terms of changes which can be attributed to the final commission reports.

First, a systematic review of Blue-Ribbon commissions across the country was undertaken. Second, an in-depth study was made of two Blue-Ribbon commissions; the Rosenberg Commission in Maryland and the Wessell Commission in New York. A major factor in choosing these commissions was the apparent contrast in their effectiveness. A questionnaire was used to survey commission members, staff, legislators, institution presidents and governor's staff, among others. The questions covered six topics: commission, commissioners, staff, external elements, commission output, and subsequent effect.

The study suggests that the following appear to contribute to the effectiveness of a Blue-Ribbon commission: attainability of the commission objectives; adequacy of the amount of time allotted for

the study; number of times the commissioners meet; accessibility of the commissioners to persons wishing to comment; sufficiency of the number of staff; selection of the staff on the basis of merit alone; depth and breadth of the background research conducted by the staff; consideration of the testimony from public hearings; favorable media reaction; repeated use of experts other than commission members and staff; ample substantiation of the commission recommendations in the final report; consideration of the political potency of the major affected interests in the implementation process; and the activity of the majority of commissioners in the implementation process.